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SIX CENTURIES

OF

WORK AND WAGES.

The History of English Labour.

BY

JAMES E. THOROLD ROGERS, M.P.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

SINCE I published, nearly eighteen years ago, the first two volumes of my history of agriculture and prices, I have been frequently urged to extract and exhibit those parts of my researches which illustrate the history of labour and wages. To have done this to any purpose, it was necessary that I should have in my possession such a continuous record of wages actually earned as would enable me to traverse the whole of the six centuries which intervene between the time at which the first information begins and that at which our present experience concludes. I have already published the facts which bear on more than half the whole period, *i.e.*, for 324 years, and I have collected evidence, as yet unpublished, for 120 years more, *i.e.*, for the 444 years which begin with the forty-third year of Henry III., 1258-9, and conclude with the first of Anne, 1702-3. Sufficient information for the residue has been supplied from the writings of Arthur Young and Sir Frederic Eden in the eighteenth century, and from numerous writers in the nineteenth, the principal authority in the latter period being Porter.

It would have been of little value to have collected evidence as to the wages of labour unless I had also been in possession of adequate information as to general prices from which to estimate precisely what was the purchasing power of wages. Now I have published the prices of food from 1259 to 1582, and from 1582

a record of wheat and malt prices has been registered every six months at four important centres, Oxford, Cambridge, Windsor, and Winchester, under the statute 18 Eliz. cap. 6. Besides, for the purposes of my inquiry, I am sufficiently provided with the evidence of such other prices as enables me to translate money wages actually paid into the necessaries of life. I cannot, indeed, in the later period exhibit the position of the labourer with the same exactness which is in my power for the period during which I have compiled and published the evidence of wages which were actually paid, and provisions which were actually purchased or sold. In the period which intervenes between the first record of wages and the death of Henry VIII. (1547), during which the condition of the labourer was progressively good for more than a century and a half, and stationary at the highest level for nearly the whole of Henry's reign, more than thirty-seven years in duration, it is possible to follow the course of wages as exactly as that of any other article which is bought or sold, and to represent them by their power over all kinds of commodities. After this date, when they declined greatly in value, and the degradation of labour, owing to causes which I hope to make clear, began, I possess nearly the same continuous and minute knowledge for more than a century and a half, some being published, some being in notes. But except for about fifty years in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, the wages of labour have been a bare subsistence, constantly supplemented by the poor rate, till, in modern times, a considerable amelioration in the condition of some kinds of labour, owing, I believe, to a peculiar cause, has been effected. I have attempted to point out what that cause has been, and to suggest that it should be extended and encouraged.

It may perhaps be objected, that though I have dealt with a subject which is entirely new, I have appended no notes and have given no authorities for my facts. But for half the period

I could have made no reference except to my own publications, and for another century and more I can refer only to my unpublished notes, and the tabular statements which I have drawn up from them. The difficulty is an exceptional one, for no one has entered on this field of research but myself, or has even, to the best of my knowledge, attempted to make use of what I have published for purposes like those which are before me in compiling the present volume. I could, if it were needed, however, give ample verification for all that I have alleged, not, indeed, from the original sources, for those are contained in muniment rooms, in the Record Office, and in public libraries, but from my own transcripts and averages. For the later period, the authorities, as I have said, are chiefly Young, Eden, and Porter.

Again it may be objected, that I reiterate particulars in dealing with the topic before me. But in the reconstruction of the social state of England six centuries ago, and in the narrative of its history or development, it is frequently the case, especially when there is seen to be no marked change in the process under which men lived and worked, except in so far as the interests of the class about which I am writing are raised or depressed, that one has to piece out the picture which one attempts to draw from details which may need to be restated in the narrative, but were characteristic of an earlier as well as of a later epoch. Thus there is little change in the economy of rural life, as far as the labourer is concerned, from the days of the third Henry till the days of the eighth, and illustrations of the labourer's condition may be safely taken from any part of the period.

The plan which I put before myself was to devote the first chapters of the book to a sketch of early English society up to and during the latter half of the thirteenth century. In handling this part of my subject, I had to deal with the pursuits of the Englishman at this time, and especially with that

which was the business of the vast majority of our people, agriculture; land in England, as one can gather by a wide induction from the facts contained in existing records, having been divided in nearly equal moieties between manorial lords and tenants at fixed rents and with permanent holdings. Having dealt with the pursuits of this vast majority, it remained that I should say a little about life in towns and the processes by which trade was carried on. This is followed by an account of the several classes who made up mediæval society, all these subjects being handled in the first six chapters.

The remainder of the work deals particularly with the history of labour and wages, though I have felt myself constrained to touch on the general history of agriculture, and to dwell on some few particulars in the political history of the country, in connection with the main topic of my inquiry. But I have designedly abstained from entering on the new system of taxation which, beginning with Cecil's book of rates and continuing through the excise and customs system of the Protectorate, the Restoration, and the Revolution, at last imposed nearly all the burden of taxation on those whose resources were crippled, and whose freedom was taken away by a variety of enactments imposed in the interests of a narrow but powerful class.

I have attempted to show that the pauperism and the degradation of the English labourer were the result of a series of Acts of Parliament and acts of government, which were designed or adopted with the express purpose of compelling the labourer to work at the lowest rates of wages possible, and which succeeded at last in effecting that purpose. These Acts have become historical, and except in so far as they are responsible for the existence of much that is difficult and regrettable in the condition of the working classes now, they have no existence at the present time. We have long since ceased to regulate wages by Acts of Parliament and the ordinances

of quarter sessions. The despotic law of parochial settlement has been materially modified; working men are no longer liable to imprisonment and penal servitude for trying to sell their labour at the best advantage; and the wages of labour are no longer mulcted by corn laws and other restraints of trade. There still, I am aware, exist persons who would, if they could, resort to the old system upon specious pretexts, or with avowed audacity. But it does not follow that because the cause is removed, the effect has ceased.

I cannot, therefore, be charged with attempting to set class against class in the narrative which I have given. Were it necessary, indeed, to do so, in order to assist the moral and material progress of those who, living by labour, enable others to live without labour, or live by mischievous labour, I should not hesitate to use all my powers in that direction, for the charge of setting class against class has always been made by those who wish to disguise their own indefensible advantages by calumniating the efforts of those who discover abuses and strive to rectify them. But I believe that the efficacy of the charge has been much weakened by the estimate which the public instinctively forms about those who venture on using it.

My reader will, I trust, find that I have been able to trace the causes which brought about the misery and degradation of labour to acts and persons which are historical, and that the process of restoration is retarded by privileges and practices which are still dominant,—privileges and practices which, unless they are relinquished and abandoned, will give occasion in England, which has hitherto been quit of it, for an extension of that spirit of communism which finds its origin and its apology in the injuries, some real and some imaginary, which the many suffer at the hands of the few.

I have the further purpose of contributing one portion to the historical method of Political Economy. The older dogmatism of this science or philosophy, after being for a long

time distasteful, has latterly been shown to be untrue. Many of the formularies which were accepted as axiomatic truths by the disciples of Ricardo and Mill are now found to be as incorrect as they are unsatisfactory. Besides, it is not enough for the economist to predict, he is expected to suggest the remedies for the evils under which society is labouring, or yield the social question up to the socialist. It may be that he has discovered certain laws of nature which will, unless proper means are used, bring about permanent evils, though very frequently his laws are merely tendencies, the corrective to which is supplied, partially at least, from agencies which the science has hitherto neither suspected nor accounted for; sometimes are paradoxes which are quite baseless. Now a science which detects a disease has its use if it can point out how the disease has arisen, and thus can check the development of that which would make the malady continuous and permanent. That science, however, takes a far higher place which is not only accurate in its diagnosis but skilled in the proper therapeutics. But the discoverer of true causes has travelled a long way on the road to the remedy. And this, if it be rightly taken, is what the historical economist may effect, but the theoretical economist has mistaken.

Since I have written the pages which follow, the attention of the people has been called from various, and I am bound to say, very unexpected, quarters, to the question of how the working classes in large cities, perhaps even in rural England, are to be housed. I am not quite sure that many of those who have made this an urgent question will relish the inevitable answer which will be given as to the causes of the situation and as to the changes which must precede the development of a better result. If an attempt is made to meet the mischief by putting the burden of satisfying a public necessity upon those who are no way responsible for the result, and by exempting those who are responsible from all the charges of

reform, and even by enriching them through the machinery of the reform, I venture on predicting that some of those who have raised the question will regret that they were rash enough to have stirred in the matter.

Fortunately for all, the leaders of English labour have sought to better the condition of their followers by processes which the most rigid of economists cannot condemn. I have taken occasion to point out what, in my opinion, is the economical significance of a trade union or labour partnership. That this principle may be extended so as to embrace all labour, should, I am convinced, be the wish of every one who desires to save his country from the spread of doctrines which are as pernicious to the true interests of labour as they are destructive of all progress, and ultimately of all hope. Nothing would be more fatal than the despair which might succeed in reconstructing society from its foundations.

Since this book has been written,—since, indeed, the foregoing part of the preface has been written—I have had the advantage of seeing the very able and intelligent essay of Mr. Giffen, the President of the Statistical Society, on the progress of the working classes during the last half-century —*i.e.*, from 1833, speaking generally, to 1883. A great deal of what Mr. Giffen has collected by way of material for his conclusions is of very unequal value. Many of his inferences are perhaps too hopeful, many of his economical principles are of very doubtful cogency, and I have, indeed, read nothing lately, the results of which are more open to debate and discussion.

But Mr. Giffen's figures (and he regrets, as I do, that evidence for the last fifty, or, indeed, for the last hundred years, is not more copious) are, as far as they go, exact and instructive. The period with which he starts was one of unexampled oppression. The legislature had, indeed, got rid of the combination laws, but the political economists of

the old school and the judges had revived them in the very worst form and with the most malignant pedantry. I need only refer to the conviction of the six Dorsetshire labourers in July 1834, their transportation for a perfectly innocent act, their pardon, and the concealment of the pardon from them, in consideration, I presume, of the vested interest to which the Sydney Government had sold them at a pound a head. It is, I think, to be regretted that Mr. Giffen did not describe, as he certainly could have done, what was the condition of wages in relation to profits fifty years ago. I hope that I have sufficiently stated it; I am certain that I have done so with much restraint and moderation in the following pages. That wages have risen I thankfully admit. Water rises in an artesian well. But the physicist who explains the rise has to take account of the pressure which previously kept the water below its just level. In the case of labour, the economist should have announced and deplored it.

It is noteworthy, too, that the kinds of labour for which Mr. Giffen has adduced evidence have all been aided and protected by trade unions. I refer to those which are tabulated in page 5 of his address. The inference from those paid for seamen is more doubtful; for the comparison is between wages paid in sailing and in steam vessels, two callings which are only nominally one. Most doubtful is the guess of Sir James Caird as to the wages of agricultural labourers. Here we do not know whether the 60 per cent. means the rate of wages, or the cost of labour. We do not know, as we can know in the case of artizans, whether it means real wages or money wages, or whether it is not true that the mere cost of living fifty years ago in country places was fifty per cent. less than it now is, while occupation was more certain and more continuous. The critics whom the landowners employed to examine the agricultural statistics of the past, always used to comment on the allowances made to

farm labourers. There must have been some meaning in the plea, or it would hardly have been put forward. I speak of responsible writers; no reasonable person notices anonymous critics, least of all those who take the wages of a publisher's review.

The question, in fact, of the present position of labour cannot be discussed in a short essay. But no comment, however slight or superficial, will be other than misleading which does not give an estimate of the English labourer's condition fifty years ago, when it dwells on the progress which he has made since that period. What the state of this country would have been, if he had not made progress, is pretty certain; and I am afraid that we shall not entirely escape the speculative evils on which most far-sighted people are now dwelling, if he is not made to realise that other and considerable reforms are forthcoming in the near future.

In the interval, despite the interest which is felt in speculative novelties and startling theories of reconstruction, the English workman, in his best and most thoughtful forms, is more intent on seeking out and adapting the process by which the interests of employer and employed should be harmonized than in striving after an entirely new departure. The Continental socialist has hitherto owned that England is a barren field, which bears none of his fruit, and seems unable even to make the seed which he sows germinate. This indifference to theory is not due to selfishness or to the deadening effects of competition, for it is the essential characteristic of the trade unionist that he sacrifices himself to the good of the voluntary corporation with which he has associated himself, to an extent which foreigners do not understand or imitate. According to those who are entitled to speak with authority on the subject, the English unionist readily subscribes for the purpose of his organization fully two-and-a-half per cent. of his income, and sometimes more. The Conti-

nental artizan, it would seem, can with difficulty be persuaded to contribute a sixth of the sum. I do not, therefore, infer, with my friend M. Laveleye, that the English workman is yielding to Continental ideas, for I find that the essence of all foreign schemes, as portrayed in M. Laveleye's excellent work, "Le Socialisme," is the sacrifice of others, while the English workman essays to achieve the solution of his problems by the preliminary sacrifice of himself; partially, imperfectly, and unequally, I grant, but still consistently and on principle. Above all, he does not invoke the aid of the State.

For my part, I believe that as the English people has taught other nations the machinery of parliament and representative government, has slowly, after many struggles, and after having been long made the experiment of insincere factions, won, or is winning, the admission of all who deserve it to the constitution, and has constantly falsified those sinister predictions about a hungry and angry democracy which have been the stock-in-trade of reactionaries, so it is likely hereafter to solve the far more important question as to the true harmony between the rights of property and the rights of labour. We have been confidently warned that the power of the people will be the spoliation of the rich. Nothing of the kind has happened as yet; nothing of the kind has been threatened; nothing of the kind has been hinted at. The democracy of the towns have formulated no claim, instructed no representative in this direction. They wish to distribute property, but by the honest operation of an equitable purchase. They wish to better the wages of the workman, but by the equally equitable interpretation of the market, of the goods which they produce, and the price which the consumer is prepared to give for them. They are singularly, generously oblivious of past ill-usage, and seem to have no animosity against the classes and the institutions to which

their fathers owed the miseries deliberately inflicted on their lot. They contrast favourably with many of their critics, who do not disguise their desire for reaction. But the best hope of the future lies in the existence of a temper among the people, which is equally removed from the temptation to revenge and is contemptuous of the sophistries which a narrow self-interest is ventilating.

I am well aware that these views will seem paradoxical. But in political matters it has been long since proved that aristocratical government is a failure and its prolongation a mischief and a menace. It forms wrong judgments, and when it is right by accident in its ends, it adopts wrong means, or inverts the order in which its grudging and tardy reforms should be effected. Nor has the franchise of a more extended and real kind than that which existed from the Restoration to the first Reform Bill done much better. This country owes much to the Parliaments which sat between 1832 and 1868. But they would have done far better had the franchise been that of 1867. They will do better still when the peasant is allowed to express his judgment on the policy of Government.

But the value of popular opinion on the policy of Parliament and the administration is as nothing to the usefulness of combined action on the part of labour with regard to social questions. "The crowd," says Aristotle, the wisest interpreter of ancient political forces under the clearest circumstances in which they have ever been estimated, "makes better general judgments than any individual whatsoever. It is in the main incorruptible. Like a large sheet of water, the multitude is less liable to sinister influences than the few, for when the individual is influenced by passion or any similar impulse, his judgment must be distorted, while it is hard for all collectively to be led by passion or to err."

The difficulty is not to get wise action, but to get any

action at all. The mass of persons in England take a languid interest in political action, and a capricious line on social questions. They have had reason to believe that politics are the mere game of two hereditary and privileged parties, in which it signifies little which gets a temporary ascendency. They are convinced of the hollowness of political cries, and are under the impression that the public service is a phrase by which politicians mean private advantage. Since 1867, they have made few demands on Parliament, apparently because they have seen that Parliament is more busy in arbitrating between rival interests of a special character than in considering the general good. They may do more in the future. They may, like Jonathan in the day of battle, taste the wild honey in the wood and find their eyes enlightened. But I for one do not fear that, like the rest of the people, they will fly upon the spoil.

JAMES E. THOROLD ROGERS.

House of Commons.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

Archives of English History—Number and Copiousness of—Domesday, and the Blank which follows it—Commencement of Economical Archives—Degradation of the Anglo-Saxon Nobility—The English the Allies of the King—He is the largest Landowner—The Ministers of the Sovereign, Churchmen—The King's Principal Revenues—The Exchequer, a Source of Power and Object of Attack—The Method of the Exchequer Audit copied in private Accounts—These Accounts Evidence of Title, and therefore preserved—Henry the Second's Position and Abilities—Effects of Becket's Murder—The Liability to Military Service at the bidding of the Crown—The Origin and Effects of Escuage—The English Army, its Character and Traditions—Open to Villeins, though the Militia was not—The Story of Sale in 1381—The Contrast of England with other Nations in Western Europe—The Treatment of the English King by his Subjects—The Commutation of Military Service for Money imitated in Domestic Matters between Lord and Serf—Matthew Paris—His Value as an Interpreter of Public Opinion and Social life—The Beginnings of Hostility to the Roman Court—Henry III.—His Character, and that of his Reign.

THE archives of English history are more copious and more continuous than those of any other people. The record of public events begins with the Teutonic invasion of the fifth century, and is prolonged, with scarcely a break, down to our own times. There are periods in which the information is scanty. The events of the reign of Edward IV. have not been preserved in such abundance as those of Edward I. We know more about the life and times of Archbishop Becket than we do about the life and times of Archbishop Morton. But we are rarely left without contemporary annalists, and those authoritative materials by which the historian can give continuity and vivacity to his narrative. As the political history of England can be written from its beginnings, so can the history of its laws, which are founded on the customs of the Teutonic races. Again, the constitutional history of our people has been traced back to customs which long precede

the Conquest. Its financial history is contained in a series of documents engrossed annually from the days of the first Plantagenet to those of the fifth monarch of the House of Hanover, which exist in unbroken continuity in the great collection of national archives. No other country possesses such a wealth of public records. But those, for the last three centuries at least, are supplemented by still more abundant materials in private collections, the quantity and value of which are not yet estimated, though research into them has frequently thrown a new light on public events, or suggested a new theory of public policy, or modified the traditional judgments which have been promulgated about public men.

The economical history of England is illustrated with singular clearness towards the end of the eleventh century, by that great survey of the whole kingdom, with the exception of the four northern counties and part of Lancashire, which is known as Domesday Book. This unique and invaluable record, which has never yet been adequately analysed, is a register of landowners and tenants, describes the changes which had been effected by the Conquest, and exhibits the economical condition of the English under the government of William. But the social history of England is almost a blank for nearly two centuries afterwards, except for the little which may be gathered from the chroniclers. The new light which is thrown on the economic and social condition of the country at the time when continuous archives inform us of the facts, reveals a very different state of things from that which is exhibited in Domesday.

The information from which the economical history of England and the facts of its material progress can be derived, become plentiful, and remain continuously numerous from about the last ten or twelve years of the reign of Henry III. Before this time there is not, I believe, a farm account or a manor roll in existence. Suddenly these documents, from which this aspect of English history can be constructed, are found abundantly. It is noteworthy that changes of practice in the conduct of business occur almost simultaneously all over the country. Even changes of hand-

writing are discovered at widely different places, but with singular uniformity of time. An expert in the common hand of the English scribe will tell the date of a document within a few years, whether its origin be Lancashire, Kent, Warwickshire, Norfolk, or Northumberland. It is plain that the intercourse of Englishmen in the so-called middle ages must have been frequent and familiar, even if there were not abundant evidence to show how general was the habit of travel with certain classes of the community. But such an intercourse is the principal factor of what is called public opinion, that sentiment which has been so difficult to interpret, still more to anticipate, in the political action of this country, but which has, at various epochs of English history, startled sovereigns and governments by the suddenness of its action and the intensity of its purpose.

The Norman Conquest appears to have almost completely supplanted the aristocracy of the Anglo-Saxon race, and to have put the adventurers who accompanied William into the place of those nobles who had ruled the peasantry. It seems that the lower classes were no better off, and no worse off, after the Conquest than they had been before it. The thane had his villeins and slaves; and there is no reason to believe that the Norman baron was a worse master than the Saxon thane whom he superseded. William changed the local administrators in Church and State; and he had to deal with those whom he had dispossessed. The disinherited had their partisans; and naturally there was partisan warfare wherever it was likely to be successful,—in the morasses of Ely and the fells of the Northern borders. The outlaws of the Conquest, when resistance became hopeless, assassinated the intrusive Norman; and William imposed a serious liability on the district in which the outrage was committed. By a series of accidents, the collective importance of which cannot, in the interests of administrative government, be over-estimated, any murder, the doer of which was not taken red hand, became an affair of the King's court; for the hundred was liable to a penalty of from £36 to £44 in case the culprit were not found out and surrendered.

With few exceptions, the Anglo-Saxon lords were degraded, and assumed a lower social position, or were wholly dispossessed, and sought their fortunes in other countries. But the higher social element of the residual English was still strong enough to be useful to the sovereign in an emergency, and the lower retained and clung to their local institutions. It was therefore easy for the king to appeal to his English subjects, and to use their services against rebellious barons and their retainers and, if he were strong enough, to secure them, after he won his victory, against notable outrages. He soon saw that it was wise to keep entire a force which might be employed against the dangers which his own aristocracy might cause him. Experience confirmed his anticipation. The second and third Norman kings found their most useful allies in their English subjects; and the *savants* of the Norman and Plantagenet sovereigns soon began to protect the tenants of the Norman lords, by the machinery of the law courts, against the arbitrary authority of their superiors.

The English king was the largest landowner in the kingdom, and he stood to his tenants in the same position that any great landowner did to his. But great as his estate was in comparison with that of others, it was scanty in amount compared with that of his great lords, if they acted in concert, and it was liable to demands to which they were not exposed. The king had to undertake the expenses of administration, of justice, and of police, except in so far as the machinery of local self-government relieved him from such duties. Besides, in order to keep up his own influence, he had to conciliate his advocates, his officials, and his partisans with gifts. In other words, he had to construct, maintain, and occasionally to revive a royal party. Such a policy required mature vigour and incessant care. The Crown was enfeebled and the country impoverished and irritated whenever these conditions were not observed. It cannot be by accident that social discontent and disorder always followed on the reign of a sovereign who succeeded to the throne in his minority. The government of the country was put to its severest strain in the reigns of Henry III., Richard II., Henry VI., and Edward VI. The

certainty that the same result would ensue in the contingency of Edward V. reigning under tutelage, is the sole apology for Richard the Third's usurpation. It is probable that the danger of a child-king was present to the minds of those who brought about the Revolution of 1688; and that the position which English statesmen for four centuries have successfully insisted on, that the office of regent is in the gift of Parliament, and can be exercised only under such conditions as Parliament may impose, has been constantly affirmed.

The king was led, for many reasons, to employ such persons as could be rewarded for their services from the revenues of the Church. At the Conquest, the dignitaries of the old monarchy were constrained to retire, but the patrimony of the Church was not diminished. Its bishoprics, deaneries, canonries, and benefices were frequently the reward of secular service on the Crown's behalf. When the Papacy arrived at despotism over Christendom, as absolute, as far reaching, and as aggressive as that of the old Roman Empire, through agencies which it believed to be moral, but later criticism has declared to have been superstitious, and a short experience proved to have speedily become dishonest, it saw with unerring instinct that the bestowal of benefices for political services was the principal obstacle which must be removed before these aims could be achieved. When it found that it could not succeed in the war against investitures, it most adroitly and with far greater success insisted on the right of provision, that is, of nominating to ecclesiastical offices in expectancy, or of taking advantage of technical flaws in an election, the legal right to which was in certain hands, in order to establish its own nominee. Sometimes the king was disappointed, sometimes the pope. Henry II. thought that he had secured a courtier prelate in Becket, and owed all the misfortunes of his reign to the miscalculation which he made in his man. Innocent III. imagined that he secured a papal prelate in Langton, and found that his hold over England was irrecoverably loosened by the man of his choice.

Beyond the profits which he derived from his private estate, the king was in receipt of certain dues from his

subjects. He was the heir of all escheats—that is, of all estates in which there was a failure of legal heirs, and of all forfeitures—that is, of all estates, the owners of which had committed such crimes as involved the destruction of rights in property. The former, in an age of violence and risk, were probably more frequent than the latter, though forfeiture was by no means uncommon, unless the partisans of a rebellion were too numerous and too united to be disinherited. But whether the estate was escheated or forfeited, the grants of the former possessor were respected, and the king succeeded to those rights only which the misfortune or the misconduct of the owner could extinguish.

The king had also the right of claiming fixed and casual dues from those of his inferiors who stood in certain relations to him. The tendency in the mind of his subjects was to make all dues, with some exceptions, fixed, to estimate them once for all in an unchangeable quantity of money, to resent or resist all attempts to collect more than was due, and to exercise a discretion as to the frequency of collection. In the first Great Charter, that of John, the assent of the kingdom is to be required for all extraordinary grants; and though this condition was omitted in some subsequent editions of the Charter, it was never forgotten, was suspended for special reasons, and was ultimately acknowledged to be a fundamental right of the subject.

The king had trivial dues on exports and imports, called customs. It is obvious that, in the first place, the trade of the time was too small to make such sources of revenue lucrative, and that in the next, there neither did nor could exist any adequate police for the collection of other than small dues at the principal ports. In all likelihood the imports and exports at the numberless smaller ports were necessarily neglected.

He derived, however, and in consideration of very solid advantages secured to the subject, a considerable income from fees of court for conveyances. From very early times, the conveyances of estates by what were called fines, were registered and carefully recorded in the archives of the Court.

The convenience of an indefeasible title was obvious, the guarantee of the register was complete, and there was no part, perhaps, of the business of the great office of the Exchequer, in which the whole revenue of the sovereign was collected and audited, which excited so little dissatisfaction as that by which the estates of the great landowners were conveyed and assured.

But the Exchequer was felt to be armed against every one, to be constantly watching for the rights of the Crown, and to be actively vigorous in the vindication of these rights. The Crown and its officers knew that it was dangerous to rouse discontent by any general usurpation, and that it could only attempt oppression where oppression roused no sympathy for its victim. The Crown could alternately caress and fleece the Jew; but the Jew was held to be the private enemy of all debtors. It could assail successfully those whom the nobles hated, or the people distrusted and disliked. It was often incapable of defending its own instruments or favourites, but this was when it transgressed prudence in administration and excited general dislike. Individuals were wronged and outraged, and public opinion was not arrayed against the ill-doer. But it was a very different thing if the Crown attempted to oppress the whole people, to levy contributions at its own discretion, or to increase the amount of that which had been conceded. The Exchequer was the principal instrument of government, the real centre of the administration, which was always striving to increase its business and the king's revenue. Against this ever present and ever prying institution, baron and franklin, esquire and yeoman, were united. When a revolution occurred, sometimes when a revolution was avoided, the principal objects of popular indignation were the ministers of the revenue.

The great audit of the king's revenue was imitated in the account taken of the receipts and outgoings of a manor. These were made up annually, and always in the same form. The scribe who wrote out the annual roll examined the rough notes and tallies of the bailiff, and reduced the particulars to an exact profit and loss account; and on the back of the roll

entered all the stock, live and dead, on the estate, giving an account of the whole. In the same way a register was kept of the manor services and dues. The names of the tenants, the extent of their holding, the amount and value of their services, were all entered. The receipts of the lord from the police of the manor, the fines paid for offences, for assaults, for trade frauds, were all duly recorded, just as in the great roll of the Exchequer the multifarious sources of royal revenue were all duly entered, and on audit, credited to the officer whose duty it was to collect them. This system came suddenly into use all over England a few years before Henry the Third's death.

Only a few thousands of these documents survive. They had, it would appear, only an ephemeral interest. The account of one year had no importance, it would seem, to the owner of the estate, except in so far as the undischarged liabilities of the bailiff or other agent whom he employed are noted. But the universal practice of drawing up an annual account of receipts and disbursements, of assets and liabilities, of stock-taking, besides the engrossing of the manor-roll, and in the case of large properties or large establishments, other exact accounts of household expenditure, must have involved a large amount of clerical work at certain times of the year. The scribe must have been nearly as universal a person as the smith, and the number of persons who were competent to draw up a balance-sheet of numerous particulars must have been very large. There is a general impression that few persons in the later middle ages knew how to read and write. But the prodigious amount of documents penned yearly, and penned precisely, and at nearly the same time of the year, just before Michaelmas, proves that education must have been far more widely diffused than is commonly imagined. It is probable that the bailiff was not uneducated either. I have occasionally found the accounts of this personage, accounts which the scribe examined, verified and copied fairly out. It is remarkable, too, that, with hardly an exception, the accounts are written in Latin. The Latin is, of course, barbarous, full of English words

with Latin terminations; but it is always grammatical. I cannot believe that the language into which his annual balance-sheet was rendered was an unknown tongue to the bailiff, or that he would have been content to allow his liabilities to be expressed in a form which he could not understand. But I must return to this topic hereafter.

These documents, I do not doubt, were preserved because they formed evidence of title. The courts of law had laid down the rule, that no title could be shaken by adverse evidence of an earlier date than 1189. But evidence would be admitted subsequent to that date; and therefore any proof of continuous possession was valuable. At the beginning of the present century, one of the Oxford colleges attempted to establish an ancient right to tithe in an Essex parish, and supported their claim by presenting in court a number of their most ancient rolls of receipt and expenditure. It was customary, too, for a purchaser to receive from a vendor all the evidence of which the latter might be possessed. Thus the founder of an Oxford college bought an estate from an Oxfordshire family at the latter end of the fourteenth century, and received with it a number of accounts which go back to the latter part of the thirteenth. Another founder, nearly a century later, succeeded in procuring the suppression of a wealthy priory in Hampshire, the character of which was not very good, and carried to the record room of his college a number of accounts of this religious house, which run back for a long period before the suppression. The great abbey of Sion contained a number of documents which illustrate the domestic history of many among these alien priories, with the estates of which this fifteenth century religious house was endowed.

It is well known that the construction of the Exchequer was the work of Henry II., and that he was assisted in the elaboration of its machinery by the unwearied services of certain ecclesiastics who were devoted to the Crown and the interests of the Crown. The most eminent of these persons were of one family, which had long held bishoprics as the reward of their fidelity to their employer and his policy.

Henry had every opportunity for the work which he set before himself. The country was exhausted by a war of succession, which had degenerated into mere brigandage. Englishman and Norman were equally anxious to secure quiet and good government, to live under the same laws, and to aid in maintaining the king's peace. The miserable experience of anarchy and disorder had united the two nations against common foes. England is almost the only European country in which the nobles, the gentry, the yeomen, and the burghers have for ages made common cause against public dangers, whether the danger was a foreign enemy introduced into the kingdom by a tyrannical ruler, as was the case under John, or a reckless waste of the resources of government, as was the case in the reigns of Henry III. and Henry VI., or the peril of unworthy favourites, whom the experience of the country detected in the times of Edward II. and Richard II., or the development of an arbitrary system of government such as that which made opposition to the king irresistible in 1641 and 1688. In those emergencies the whole body of the English people were of one mind, as they have been in the defence of governments which were not indeed perfect, but interpreted the true interests of the country.

Henry II. was a man whose political instincts were far in advance of his age, and he owed his troubles to the fact that he yielded to them and strove to do what was premature. He came to the conclusion that he was strong enough to do battle with the Church in the interests of good government. That he nominated Becket to the see of Canterbury under the conviction that he had a thorough-going partisan of the royal power and policy in him is plain. That the hesitation of Becket in taking the office was understood by Henry to be mere prudery is equally manifest. That Henry's suspicions were aroused when Becket instantly divested himself of his secular offices, and determined to give himself up wholly to his ecclesiastical duties, was the natural result of the disappointment which he felt at the error which he committed and of the foresight with which he anticipated trouble to come.

He might have temporized with the new archbishop, and have employed him in the correction of those ecclesiastical abuses which he saw were scandalous and increasing, as his great-grandfather employed Lanfranc, under the cloak that by so doing the archbishop could strengthen the Church. He might have delayed his action till he had assured himself of success in the project which he had set his heart on. He was fully assured, as the event proved, that all the other bishops would support him, and he concluded that Becket would not stand away from his brethren. As it is well known, Becket at first subscribed to the Constitutions of Clarendon, a summary of customs which would have anticipated the changes brought about by Henry VIII. nearly four centuries afterwards, repented of his compliance, sought the pope's pardon, and irretrievably quarrelled with the king. Henry might have thought that the pope, who had quarrelled with the Emperor Frederic, and was denounced by an anti-pope, would not support Becket; and many persons must have thought with him, at times even Becket himself. But the pope strove to effect a reconciliation, and did effect it. The issue of Becket's restoration was the murder of the prelate.

I do not doubt that Henry's horror and alarm at Becket's death was genuine. He must have foreseen that the whole of his projected reforms in the Church, and his cherished hope that he would make the clergy obedient to the law, were indefinitely postponed. He had not only miscalculated the forces to which he was opposed, but he had given them, by his indiscreet language, and through the agency of Becket's murderers, who thought they were doing his bidding, an almost irresistible power against him. Henceforth the only means by which the Crown could succeed in checking the power of the ecclesiastical party, was by rousing its interests in national purposes against those of the Roman Court; and it generally did this unwillingly. Sometimes the higher clergy take part with the people against the misgovernment of the king, as Langton did against John, and many of the prelates did against his son. Sometimes the bishops are incensed against the Papal court, by reason of its exactions and the

scandals which its favourites caused. Sometimes the monks are the objects of hostility, for their privileges and immunities were derived from the action of the Roman court, and were a perpetual grievance to the bishops and the secular clergy. At last Edward I. seized the opportunity, when both regular and secular clergy were unpopular, and were indiscreet enough to shelter themselves under the mandate of Boniface and his bull forbidding payments of taxes by the clergy, to frighten them so thoroughly that henceforth, with rare exceptions, the authorities of the Church became as docile to the Crown as they had been refractory in earlier days.

By his marriage with Eleanor of Guienne, Henry had acquired nearly the whole sea-board of France from the mouth of the Seine to Bayonne, and claimed rights of inheritance over the greater part of the Mediterranean sea-board. He inherited Normandy, which had a sort of suzerainty over Brittany, from his mother, and the territories which lay between Normandy and Guienne, and formed, as was found in the fifteenth century, a necessary connection between the two great duchies, from his father. Guienne came to him with his wife, who had also claims on Toulouse. He prepared to vindicate these claims in 1159, and took his chancellor Becket, now his dearest friend and soon to be his principal foe, with him on the expedition. He laid siege to the town, but soon abandoned the attempt, through good feeling towards the French king, who held the duchy by a claim inferior, as some jurists asserted, to those of Henry's wife. It is said that he thought it unwise to attack the French king, his feudal superior in respect of his foreign possessions, on territory which he was holding by a disputed title indeed, but by one of considerable duration. But the attempt led to results which no one could have anticipated at the time.

The universal rule under which military tenants held their possessions from the Crown was that they should give their personal attendance on the king during his wars, for a given time, exclusive of that required for going to and returning from the seat of war. When the English baronage marched to the Scotch or Welsh frontier, the charges of the journey

were comparatively slight, and were endurable. The peculiar character, too, of the double tenure in England and Normandy which the comrades of the Conqueror and their descendants possessed, made the transit from one country to another natural and easy, though in course of time it plainly became the custom for the English and French possessions of the family to be divided between descendants of the same degree, so that one should hold the former, another the latter. But the obligation imposed upon an English baron to travel on his own charges from Yorkshire or Cheshire to Toulouse might well seem intolerable. It was, and it remained to a very late period, a popular impression that the foreign possessions of the Crown were an advantage to the English people, that their revenues lightened the charge of government and increased the estate of the Crown, and more reasonably, that the intercourse between the producers and traders of England and the transmarine possessions of the king was of signal importance to the former. This was especially the case with Guienne, as I shall show hereafter. But the burden of defending those distant territories, cast on the English tenants in chief, was a great, an unfair, an intolerable load. A commutation of this payment in kind for a payment in money, which should be a fair and equal assessment, would be an advantage to all parties. It would relieve the baronage from a most unequal incident, it would give the king a manageable revenue.

Becket is understood to have been the agent in negotiating this commutation, which is known under the name of scutage or escuage. The bargain was effected, as usual, on a fixed and uniform rate, and the tenants of the Crown were made familiar with taxes levied in lieu of personal services, and at a fixed rate. In course of time the scutage is dropped, and a subsidy based on a valuation, made in the time of Edward I., and revised in that of Edward III., was substituted for it. But the fact remained,—a money contribution in lieu of personal service. The contribution again was extracted from those who were alone liable to it,—the immediate tenants of the Crown, *i.e.*, to all persons, whether holding of the

Crown or not, whether military tenants or socagers, from persons who held by a rent, and from those who held by a base tenure, as is proved by the taxing rolls or assessments of Edward I.

The funds derived from this money commutation enabled the English monarch to maintain a military force of picked and trained volunteers, whose efficiency contrasted strongly with that of the continental or ordinary feudal levies. I do not assert that at the commencement of the system such a military force was developed and maintained, but it certainly was in course of time. Nor does it appear that Henry II. used to the full the new instrument which was put into his hands. As is known, he regulated the militia of freeholders; and probably found in the wars which he undertook, most of which were for the defence of his continental dominions, that the ordinary feudal force was sufficient for his purpose. Richard was hardly at all in England. But John appears to have exacted the scutage from his English tenants constantly. He had a plea in the loss of Normandy and in the peril to which his mother's duchy was exposed. He employed the funds which he extorted in maintaining an army of mercenaries on the English soil, which he had collected for foreign service, and on the plea of foreign service had used for the oppression of his English subjects.

That at some time or other the English prelates, baronage, and commonalty would make common cause against the Crown, and assert that they must be consulted before the king was competent to levy the military tax was to be expected. This was done in 1216, and the principle of popular assent to all extraordinary taxes was affirmed in the Great Charter, was confirmed subsequently, and was never lost sight of. The right of the subject to examine into and interpret the needs of the Crown, to give or refuse subsidies, was the origin, and remained the essence of Parliamentary government. Several times, during the reign of Henry III., and before Parliamentary institutions had been formed and developed, the great council summoned by Henry debated the king's necessities and gave or refused to give assistance to the

Exchequer. To have acknowledged that the king was the sole judge of the extent to which his necessities should be relieved, would have been to surrender the fortunes of the whole of England to his discretion. To have merely received the king's message, and to have directed a scutage or a subsidy in accordance with the royal wish, would have been only the same result disguised. Debate involved the inherent right of refusal, and Matthew Paris shows that the refusal was not infrequent. It is known that the improvidence of the king, the difficulties in which the Exchequer was placed by his action, and the fact that the country was compromised, formed the apology for the association at the head of which were Simon de Montfort and Clare, and for the Barons' War. The king could not be trusted; and an attempt, temporarily futile, was made to exact guarantees from him. It is a mistake to imagine that the relations of the king and his people remained the same after the victory of Lewes and the defeat of Evesham. If Henry was anxious to grasp all that he had before these events, he found that others, especially his son, knew better, and saw that there must be a new departure. The commutation of personal service for money was the germ of the Parliamentary system, of the power of the Commons over the public purse and of the appropriation of supply. It took centuries to develop these results, but they were in the beginnings of Parliament as surely as the forest oak is in the seedling.

The army formed out of these parliamentary grants was developed during the "hundred years' war" with France. Its efficiency was remarkable. It constantly broke in pieces armies infinitely more numerous than itself, if it were only properly trained, disciplined, and handled. It was always, or nearly always, victorious in the field, though it was too small to permanently occupy the country which it conquered. But from the Battle of Crecy to the Treaty of Picquigny, an English army was the terror of continental militias. From the defeat of Charles the Bold to the battle of Marignano, the Swiss were the most renowned and formidable soldiers in Europe. From the decline of the Swiss power till the latter

end of the sixteenth century, the Spanish foot-soldier took the first place in the military force of Europe. Cromwell's New Model was founded on the same principle as that which had, nearly three centuries before, been adopted by Edward III.; as was also the British army of the Revolution and the war of the Spanish Succession, as was that which Wellington formed and commanded.

None but freeholders could serve in the militia, as constructed by the Assize of Northampton. But servile birth was no obstacle to enlistment in the king's own army, and we get, incidentally, evidence of the fact. When in 1381, the uprising of the serfs took place, and the siege of Norwich was undertaken by Littlestreet, Sir Robert Sale was captain-general of the city. The insurgents tried to induce him to desert and become their leader. He had been born of villein descent, had enlisted in the king's army, had served in France, had been knighted, and raised to high military command. The rebels argued that as he was no gentleman born, but, like themselves, the son of a villein, he should and ought to lead them. They proposed, as a reward for his compliance, to put a quarter of England under his obedience, for it was Tyler's plan to govern England in the king's name, by military officers set over various districts of the country. Sale refused to comply, and remained faithful to the king's service. Perhaps the reasoning employed by the insurgents was not the most prudent and convincing that might have been suggested. He defended himself as long as he could, till, notwithstanding his gigantic strength, he was overpowered by numbers. But the story shows that a serf could rise to knighthood during the wars of Edward, at a time when it was difficult indeed to overcome obstacles of birth, and knighthood appeared to be peculiarly the privilege of the well born. The royal army, like the Church, effaced distinctions of birth, in the case of those who entered its ranks. A Sale could become a general, just as a century or more before a Grostête could become a bishop. Hence while in France and Germany the distinction between the noble and the peasant or burgher was intensified as time went on, in England the nobility was

constantly recruited from the lower orders through the army, and in course of time through trade. I do not recall any instance in which the collateral relatives of Churchmen were ennobled by the wealth of prelates or other opulent ecclesiastics, but it is clear that the brothers of Chichele, perhaps the kinsmen of Wykeham, were enriched by the fortunes of their clerical relatives, though both these personages devoted a large part of their wealth to the foundation of colleges in Oxford and elsewhere.

We may therefore trace the germ of great political and social results in the commutation for personal service on the foreign possessions of the English kings,—possessions, it will be remembered, which to a greater or less extent were united to the English Crown, for nearly four centuries, *i.e.*, from the Conquest in 1066 to the final expulsion of the English from France in 1453. The commutation led directly to the formation of parliamentary institutions, which bargained for the development of public liberties and private rights by grants in aid of the Crown. It created an army which from time to time has had no parallel in efficiency. It broke down the distinction of race and birth, and ultimately made the tenure of the peasant more desirable than that of the knight and noble; so that in the end the higher qualities of land were transformed into the semblance of the lower. It united all parties, the nobles fitfully and last of all, against the extravagant pretensions of the prerogative, so that England at a very early period was the theatre of very singular political events. A change of dynasty owing to the decadence of a reigning house and the rise of a powerful subject was effected thrice in French history. The balance of power in the German Empire was so nicely dubious in German history, that at one time the interposition of the pope was able to ruin an imperial family; and at another time the ambition of the German princes led to the complete degradation of the imperial authority, during the period which intervenes between the fall of the House of Suabia and the rise of the House of Austria. But in England the whole people has deposed the reigning monarch six times,

selecting in five of these cases some other member of the same family to fill the room of the dethroned king. On two occasions, earlier than any of these instances, it strove to dethrone the king. The first attempt would probably have been successful had not the king died in the midst of the crisis; for John appears to have been reduced to almost the lowest extremity at the time of his opportune death. In the other case there was a counter revolution effected, as is manifest, by the singular tact and ability of the heir to the throne; for Edward I. was as vigorous and far-sighted a ruler as his father, Henry III., was irresolute and imprudent. Now it does not seem that this unity of purpose, frequently recurring in English history, so puzzling to foreigners that they called the English "the disloyal nation," could have been developed except there had not only been a community of interest, but familiarity with the agency by which discontent could be effectively expressed. In the course of this inquiry we shall find some instances of a similar intensity of opinion influencing the action of large masses of the common people.

The commutation of precarious service for fixed money payments became the rule. The charters of self-government accorded to the towns were always accompanied by an obligation on the part of the town to pay the fee farm rent of the municipality to the sovereign; and these annual payments, fixed in amount, were in early times an important part of the king's income. Nor could the lords of the serfs avoid following the example. It may be the case that Madox is right in his interpretation of those entries in John's pipe-rolls, which seem to indicate the actual sale of serfs and their families. I am disposed to interpret these entries as implying that the services of these persons were sold, or the customary payments made by them in lieu of service were farmed out—a practice which prevailed long after the period to which Madox refers. But in the many thousands of bailiffs' and manor rolls which I have read, I have never met with a single instance of the sale of a serf. Nor have I discovered any labour-rent for which an equivalent money-payment could not be substituted. That the base tenure of

these serfs, villeins, and ultimately tenants by copy or custom, involved certain very disadvantageous contingencies and some very humiliating liabilities is certain, and I shall have hereafter to comment on them. Most of these nearly cease at or about the middle of the fifteenth century, for reasons which I hope I can explain hereafter. It was by these contingencies and liabilities that the tenure of the copyholder differed at a very early period from that of the socager, who paid a fixed money, or fee-farm rent, for his holding, who had fixity of tenure, but who was liable to distraint or even eviction on the non-payment of his permanent annual charges as late as the sixteenth century.

Any one who reads the work of the ablest and most instructive of our chroniclers, Matthew Paris, will find how marked a change has come over English life between the accession of John and the rise of the opposition to the government of Henry III. During John's reign, there was but little organization against the arbitrary action of the Crown, and every class in England was in turn the victim of its rapacity. John defied the pope, but was brought on his knees only because his people were deserting him. When he made England a fief of the Roman see, he imagined for a time that he could hold his people in complete subjection by the assistance of the pontiff; but the whole nation rose against him, extorted the liberties of the Great Charter, and, with Langton at their head, defied both pope and king. But John, thanks to the mercenaries whom he levied and paid, was able to resist them, till they invited Louis of France to wrest the crown from the unworthy king. It seems that the action of the pope in John's reign, and in that of his son, in interfering on the side of the king with the universal demands of the people, is the beginning of that deep-seated hostility to the Roman court which is so marked in the best and most zealous Churchmen during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. But it is also clear that John was far more autocratic than any of the sovereigns who followed him, and that the confederates of Runnymede did much more than extort a charter, for they organized a permanent opposition to the government.

Langton and Pembroke contrived to free England from Louis and from John's mercenaries. The policy of these great men was followed by the Justiciary, Hubert de Burgh, and the king's peace was generally maintained. Fortunately for England, the death of Philip Augustus was soon followed by that of his son, Louis VIII., and the accession of a child, Louis IX., the management of whose minority occupied all the anxieties of the queen-regent. There was, on the whole, peace between England and France, and, on the whole, peace between England and Scotland. During this reign, prosperity was general. The grant of a fifteenth was conceded, under the express condition that the charter of the forests should be granted in return,—a precedent for similar bargains, not always completed, and for constant wrangling, when the king made his poverty the plea for demands on his subjects.

It is possible that during the minority of Henry III. the estate of the Crown was lessened. Henry was always in pecuniary difficulties. His debts grew, payments to his household were in arrears; and on one occasion we are told of the brigandage which disgraced Hampshire, the head-quarters of which were at Alton, that not a few of the culprits were Henry's own servants, driven to these acts in consequence of the non-payment of their wages. The king gave away largely, not to say lavishly, to his favourites, especially to his half-brothers and to his wife's relations. He was fond of splendid entertainments, and indulged in a passion for building. He engaged recklessly in undertakings which were certain to be costly, and unlikely to be successful. The English were not only perpetually importuned for money, but were pillaged by the papal emissaries, and fleeced by intrusive nominees of the pope. The court of Rome had prohibited, under the plea that the transaction was almost certain to be simoniacal, the nomination of prelates by the prince, only to appropriate the collation of these benefices on behalf of his own creatures, and the king was passive or consenting. The plainest language is employed by Matthew Paris to describe and denounce the king's administration, who is openly rebuked for his wilful and wanton extrava-

gance by his nobles and clergy, Matthew himself having constantly told the king his mind about Henry's conduct.

Though generally good-natured and easy-tempered, Henry was liable to violent fits of passion. He was served faithfully by Hubert de Burgh, but turned upon him at last savagely, stripped him of his property, threatened his life, compelled him to take sanctuary, and dragged him from his refuge. In the end, however, he was reconciled to his minister, and restored him to his property. He furthered the marriage of his sister Eleanor with Simon de Montfort, employed Simon in several important offices, but at last quarrelled with both, assailed his sister in the coarsest language, drove her and her husband from court, and, after a time, made up the quarrel. Never was man more capricious and uncertain, more violent and more placable. He was easy, but perfidious. The morality of the Roman court assumed to free sovereigns from the obligations of an oath; and Henry constantly availed himself of the opportunities to which his own interests prompted him, and papal dispensations made obvious and easy. He tried to manage all the affairs of his kingdom, and so directed all the unpopularity of his administration against himself, till at last every one, even his brother, whom he had so enriched that he was credited with being the wealthiest noble in Europe, took part at first with the malcontents against him.

It is, I believe, a rule that dissatisfaction with a government, and a determination to reform the conduct of affairs, are ordinarily shown when a community is generally prosperous, and that those uprisings which are the outbreak of despair, lack that organization which attains the end which it purposes. From the scanty notes which contemporary writers make of the seasons, it appears that the middle of Henry's reign was a period of plenty, owing to propitious seasons. In the later years of his activity Matthew Paris generally gives some account of the weather and crops of each year. In four of these years—1244, 1245, 1247, and 1248—this author informs us that the harvest was exceedingly abundant, the price of wheat falling to two shillings a quarter.

CHAPTER I.

RURAL ENGLAND—SOCIAL LIFE.

The Contrast between Town and Country Life early Established—Some English Towns maintained themselves and their Institutions during the Teutonic Conquest—Ranks in the English Manor—The Tenants at Cuxham, their Rents and Services, with the Money Equivalents of such Rent—The Bailiff and Serf—Ibstone Tenants, and their Services—These Services finally commuted for Money—The Money Payments carefully Exacted—The Disabilities of the Serf—Bye Industries in the Villages—Cultivation of Land Universal among all Classes—The Bailiff's Annual Roll—Leases occasionally granted for Terms—Social and Political Effects of this Practice of great Lords cultivating their own Property—The Agriculture of the small Tenants identical with that of larger Holdings—The "Rent" of the Thirteenth Century—Wheat the Principal Product of English Agriculture, and the Principal Food of the People—Facts and Reasons for this Opinion—The Lord of the Manor—The Rector of the Parish, his Revenues—The Miller—The Free and Serf Tenants—The Parish Church—The Houses of the Yeomen and the Cottagers—The Social Opportunities of the Peasantry—Their Power of Organization—Past and Present.

IT is necessary, in order to arrive at a fairly accurate conception of the economical condition and the social life of our forefathers in the thirteenth century, to attempt the description of rural and of town life up to this century. The country parish had constantly remained, with some modifications, the Teutonic settlement of the sixth century. The town, however, had acquired municipal rights, and the management, under certain conditions, of its own affairs, and was striving to attain that comparative independence and freedom from external authority which the municipalities of Roman origin had, it seems, continuously enjoyed or exercised. It is impossible to doubt that English merchants and travellers journeying to Flanders, to the towns of southern France and of Italy, or those of Rhenish Germany, should have noted what they saw in those foreign regions, and have striven to develop the institutions which had given

freedom and opulence to those cities. It is likely, too, that some of the English towns, which had a distinct history during the Roman occupation, and contrived to maintain their existence continuously during the days of the Saxon conquest and the Saxon monarchies, also retained during this obscure period some of those institutions which the system of imperial Rome had long made universal. London and York, Lincoln and Winchester, Exeter and Bath, have been inhabited cities from the days of Suetonius and Agricola. They remained, as the great military roads of the Roman occupation remained, in existence, if not in their ancient efficiency and form.

The English village, or manor, as the earliest court rolls inform us, contained several orders of social life. At the head of the settlement was the lord, to whom belonged the manor house, the demesne, which was a several estate, enclosed and occupied exclusively by him, and such rights over the inhabitants or tenants of the manor as ancient compact or more ancient custom secured to him. Sometimes these tenants held military fees, and were bound to such obligations as tenancy in knight service defined. Thus the Warden and Scholars of Merton College, in Oxford, at the close of the thirteenth century, were lords of Cuxham manor, in Oxfordshire, and its demesne, with divers rents and services. The two principal tenants, Quartermain and Pageham, each hold the fourth part of a military fee within the limits of the manor. If a scutage is imposed, they have each to pay 10*s.*, *i.e.*, the fourth part of the assessment on an entire fee. They made suit in the court. If their heirs are under age, the college has the guardianship of those heirs; if they have a female heir, the same persons have the right of disposing of her in marriage. The Prior of Holy Trinity, of Wallingford, holds a messuage, a mill, and six acres of land in free alms, *i.e.*, under no other obligation or liability than the offering of prayers on behalf of the donor. A free tenant has a messuage, with three and three quarter acres, the portion of his wife. The rent of this is 3*s.* a year. He has another messuage with nine acres, for which he pays annually

a pound of pepper, the cost of which at the time was about 1*s.* or 1*s.* 6*d.* The rector of the parish church has part of a furrow—*i.e.*, one of the divisions by which the common arable field is parcelled out. For this he pays 2*d.* a year. Another tenant holds a cottage in the demesne under the obligation of keeping two lamps lighted in the church. Another person is tenant at will of the parish mill, at 40*s.* a year. The rest of the tenants are serfs (*nativi*), or cottagers (*coterelli*)—thirteen of the former, and eight of the latter. Five of these tenants appear to be widows, and the whole manor, omitting the two tenants of military fees, appears to have contained twenty-four households.

Each of the serfs has a messuage and half a virgate of land at least, *i.e.*, certainly not less than twelve acres of arable. His rent is almost entirely corn and labour, though he makes two money payments,—a halfpenny on Nov. 12th, and a penny whenever he brews. He is to pay a quarter of seed-wheat at Michaelmas, a peck of wheat, four bushels of oats, and three hens on Nov. 12th; and at Christmas a cock and two hens, and two pennyworth of bread. He is to plough, sow, and till half an acre of his lord's land, and give his services, as he is bidden by the bailiff, except on Sundays and feast days. He is to reap three days with one man at his own charges in harvest time. He is not to marry son or daughter, to sell ox, calf, horse, or colt, to cut down oak or ash, without the lord's consent. If one estimates these services and payments in money of the time, they amount to near 9*s.*, of which 3*s.* at least must be set down for the house and curtilage about it. The labour rent for the land is therefore about sixpence an acre in money value. The soil at Cuxham is very good wheat land, a loam lying at the base of the Chiltern Hills, and yielding in good harvests what was at that time a very full return, viz., thirteen bushels of wheat to the acre, twenty of barley, sixteen of oats, and fourteen of peas. This production is far in excess of other land, the exact produce of which has come under my observation, and will be commented on.

Some of these tenants hold, besides their virgate, some other

plots of land. For these allotments they have to make hay for one day, with a comrade, and receive a halfpenny; to mow with a comrade for three days in harvest time, but at their own charges, and three other days, receiving at the latter the lord's food. The nature of these labour payments and allowances being calculated, is about 2*s.* 4*d.*; and the plot was therefore almost certainly between four and five acres in extent.

The actual rent paid in this indirect way is the ordinary amount paid for fairly good arable land. After their harvest work they are to have together sixpennyworth of beer, and each a loaf of bread. The amount of the bread given to all is to be the produce of three bushels of wheat. Every evening, after the hours are over, each of the reapers is entitled to carry off as large a sheaf of corn as he can lift on his sickle.

The cottagers pay from 2*s.* to 1*s.* 2*d.* a year for their tenements, and have to give a day or two to haymaking, receiving a halfpenny for the service. They are also bound to harvest work for from one to four days, during which they are fed at the lord's table. During the rest of the year they are free labourers, earning wages on the lord's demesne, tending cattle, sheep, or pigs on the common of the manor or in the woods, and engaged in the various crafts which were customary in the village, or might be required by the more opulent employers. The village probably contained from sixty to seventy inhabitants. The parish of Cuxham is small, containing only 487 acres at the present time. But it is noteworthy that the tenants in knight service hold their tenements in Chalgrove; and it will be seen that in the thirteenth century the arable and common land in the neighbourhood contained a far larger area than the modern dimensions of the parish would imply.

The average amount cultivated by the college, who are the lords of the carucates in the manor, is, during four years for which accounts have been exactly preserved, 181½ acres. No doubt fully one-third of the arable land in these two carucates was in fallow, which brings the total to about 242 acres

the land held by the serfs amounts to about 170 acres; and the other tenements probably absorbed 30 acres more, so that from 440 to 450 acres of the present area were, in the thirteenth century, under tillage or permanent occupation. But it is perfectly clear that there must have been originally a far larger amount of common land for pasture than is implied in the residue of the present area.

For at least three generations one of the serfs of the manor was the bailiff of the college, cultivated its estate, exacted its rents and services from the other tenants, and supplied accurate accounts at the annual audit of receipts and disbursements. The office was transmitted from father to son, and many transactions of moment were entrusted to this serf-bailiff. But at last he and all his perished in the plague of 1348-9, for the name disappears from the college records, and the college inherits the chattels of the family.

The manor of Ibstone, which is partly in Oxfordshire, partly in Bucks, was also one of the estates of Merton College. Here also the college had two carucates, which were let to farm during part of the period for which information has been supplied for the Cuxham estate. They were let, indeed, for nearly forty years. At the latter part of the thirteenth century, the college cultivated its own property by a bailiff. The modern area of the parish is 1121 acres. The freehold tenants are twenty in number, the serfs four, the cottagers four.

One of these freeholders holds a virgate by charter, and pays a penny yearly at Christmas. His liabilities are—to ride with his lord when there is war between England and Wales,—the conditions of tenure were evidently old, for Wales was thoroughly subdued in 1298, the date of the rental,—to be armed with iron helmet, breastplate, and lance, and to remain with his lord, at his own charges, for forty days. If his services are required for a longer period, he is to remain with his lord at the lord's expense. He is also to do suit in the lord's court. Besides, he holds a croft, for which he pays 8*d.* yearly. A second has two half-virgates. He pays 5*s.* 6*d.* yearly, and three capons. For the first of these

half-virgates, he is to find at his own cost a reaper for three days in harvest time, is to carry his lord's corn in harvest for a day and a half, receiving as pay a sheaf of corn, and to annually carry a load to Henley-on-Thames. For the second half-virgate he is to pay 5*s.* a year. Another tenant is under the same liabilities for a similar extent of land, but he also pays a fee of 20*s.* for getting possession. Some of the parcels of land are at higher, some at lower rates, and from his name one of the tenants appears to be by origin at least a resident in Oxford. A few hold for a term of life.

The serfs (*nativi*) all hold half a virgate of land, for which they have to pay the following, in money or labour: 4½*d.* each quarter, 4½*d.* on Nov. 12th, and 1*s.* on Christmas-eve, a hen at Christmas, ten eggs at Easter, and a goose on August 1st. During one week in harvest the tenant (in this case a woman) is to find two reapers on Monday and Friday, and on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday to cut half an acre of corn daily, unless any day be a feast-day. On another week she is to find two reapers on Monday, and one on Friday. She is, at the lord's discretion, to find two men during harvest, who are to be boarded by the lord. Every fourth week, between September 29th and August 1st, save Saturdays and feast-days, she is to work with one other person. She is to take part in washing and shearing the lord's sheep. She is to plough six measures of land, every fourth Sunday, if notice be given on the Saturday, and during the same period to plough and hoe half an acre of land sown in winter, half an acre of Lent land, and half an acre for fallow. The other three tenants have exactly similar duties, so that it would seem that the labour rents of the four serfs provided the farm labour of eight persons from Michaelmas to August 1st, and four weeks' harvest work, abundant time being given to the tenants for getting in their own produce. The tenancy is more onerous than that at Cuxham, but the rents paid for the supplementary crofts and acres is low.

The four cottagers got their homes and curtilages at very low rents. But they have to reap for three days in harvest time, sometimes for one day in each of four weeks, receiving

a sheaf of corn every day for their labour. Two of them have to help in washing and shearing the sheep, and to carry five hurdles when the fold is pitched in a fresh spot.

I have given these rents, in money, in produce, and in labour, partly because they exhibit the social economy of the time, and show how the services, which in the early part of the next century were entirely commuted for money payments, were imposed on freeholders and serfs respectively; partly to point out that, onerous as these labour-rents occasionally were, they indicate a real bargain between lord and serf, and, by implication, point to an arrangement which is very far removed from that ideal state of villeinage which is described in our law books, and has been incautiously accepted by those who have written on the social state of England. According to these authorities, the serf had no rights of property or person against his lord. But as long as these dues were satisfied, it is plain the tenant was secure from dispossession. Within a little more than half a century of the period of which I am writing, when these labour-rents had been universally commuted for money payments, the same tenants are described as copyholders or customary tenants.

Mr. Hallam, the most shrewd and judicious of writers on early English history, is misled by the emphasis with which lawyers in the middle ages comment on the dependent condition of the serfs, and so conceived that they owed their emancipation from thraldom, and all negation of rights and property as regards their lords, to the good-natured contempt with which a noble would look upon the miserable savings of his serf, and his unwillingness to appropriate so poor a spoil. No opinion can be more mistaken. The noble and the lord of a manor gathered, through their bailiffs, stewards, and collectors of rent, every farthing and half-farthing which was due to them. When the custom of cultivation by the lord was abandoned, and land was let for terms of years, or upon a yearly tenancy, the collection of these ancient and minute rents became the principal business of the landlord's agent. Occasionally they were farmed out for a lump sum to any cultivator who hired the lord's demesne. They were, no

doubt, frequently bought up by the copyholders. The last trace of them disappears in the reign of Elizabeth, though fee farm rents, which have very likely taken the place, in copyholds of inheritance, of these ancient liabilities, remain to our own day.

The serf was disabled from migrating to any other habitation than the manor of his settlement. He could not bear arms in the militia. He could not enter into religion or become a secular priest, without the license of his lord, though it is very unlikely, if he furtively professed himself, that the Church would, at least in the thirteenth century, suffer him to be seized and handed back to his lord. The prohibition of the villein's ordination is one of the Constitutions of Clarendon, and the enactment points to a systematic evasion of villeinage in the middle of the twelfth century.

If the serf obtained leave of his lord to live away from the manor, he paid a small annual tax, called capitagium or chivage. These items of income are long recognised and entered among the bailiff's liabilities. They may have constantly hindered the absent serf from obtaining the privileges of burghers in the towns. But in course of time the chivage was capitalised and bought up. Sometimes the tax is, contemptuously perhaps, called culage, for this expression is not solely applied to women.

The serf was, as I have said, disabled from marrying his daughter without license and fine. Very numerous instances are found of these kinds of payment, under the name of mercheta, in the earlier times. Similarly fines are paid for marrying a daughter outside the manor, for marrying a nief, *i.e.* a female serf, who was possessed of property, and by men of another manor for marrying a female serf from her lord's manor. I have found traces of this custom, though they become very infrequent, far on into the fifteenth century. Sometimes the serf purchases his chivage and his license to marry at the same time, and is thereafter quit of all obligations.

The serf's son was unable to get instruction and enter orders, regular or secular, without his lord's consent. Entries of fines paid for going to the schools and entering the Church

are exceedingly common in the manor rolls of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, though they become increasingly rare and finally disappear in the fifteenth. These payments, degrading as they may seem, are indirect proof, occurring early, that the chattels of a serf were safe, at an early date, from arbitrary forfeiture to the lord. In 1394, at a village in Hunts, a serf had committed homicide and abjured the realm. His chattels, forfeited to his lord, the Abbot of Ramsey, are valued at £5 0*s.* 8*d.* We may be sure that he had carried away with him as much of his movables as he could. The sum, supposed to be recoverable, represents fairly enough the stock of a small farmer, the actual value of his holding, after his dues were deducted, not being more than a third or fourth of this sum.

A thirteenth century village then contained some sixty to eighty inhabitants, most of whom were constantly engaged in husbandry, all, indeed, for certain periods of the year. There were few handicraftsmen, for probably common carpenter's work was undertaken by ordinary farm hands, as we know it was by the small farmers four or five centuries later than the thirteenth. The most important artificer, indeed, was the smith; but it is plain from the records which have been preserved, that the smith's work, even on the demesne estate, was not sufficient to maintain a smith in any manor, and that the same person served the needs of three or four. When the bailiff of one of these Oxfordshire parishes makes a large purchase of millstones in London, and brings them by water to Henley, he hires the smith at this town to complete the necessary work on his purchase, before he carries them by road from Henley to their destination at Cuxham and Oxford.

It is only by casual notices that we learn anything about the existence of other industries besides agriculture in the rural districts. But it may be taken for granted that weaving was a bye product in nearly all villages, and the tanning or tawing of leather in most. Coarse linen and woollen clothing were doubtlessly manufactured in the cottages of the peasantry, for we occasionally find that flax or hemp was purchased in a raw state, and given in the villages to be woven, the former

much more rarely than the latter. The fact that woollen cloth is so rarely found in the charges of agriculture, especially at a time when payments in kind are so general, except when the purchase is made for a great noble or a wealthy corporation, suggests that homespun fabrics were generally available. The same inference is implied in the sale of locks and refuse wool in the neighbourhood of the farm. But it is also contained in the fact, though the evidence is of a later date, that many small and obscure villages in the south of England had flourishing manufactures of textile fabrics, at a period long preceding the migration of part of the Norfolk industries to the west of England, from whence, in comparatively recent times, they have travelled to the north. Even in Norfolk, which was their special home in the thirteenth century, they were carried on in villages where agriculture must have been a principal employment. The yeoman and the labourer undoubtedly fashioned for themselves in winter time, as we learn from the earliest works on husbandry, most of the tools which were needed for their calling,—all, in short, which were not made of iron or steel, or shod with iron.

The first information which we get as to the occupations of the people in rural districts discloses to us the fact that almost every one not only possessed land, but that he cultivated it. The king was not only the largest landowner in the realm, but the most extensive agriculturist, the wealthiest owner of live and dead stock. The estates of such magnates as the Earls of Norfolk and Gloucester were nearly all cultivated by their lords; and I owe to the accident of the surrender of Bigod's lands at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and to the escheat of other and similar estates, and to the preservation of some few fragments of what must have been at one time exceedingly abundant in the public archives, that I have been able to discover so much of the economical condition of mediæval England. On nearly every manor there was a bailiff, who cultivated the soil for his lord, made purchases of necessary stock and materials, hired labour, sold produce, and submitted his account in an exact and elaborate

balance sheet yearly. The form which this account takes is uniform, whatever part of the country it comes from. No manuscripts of the middle ages are commoner, and frequently none are better preserved than the handy books of those legal and commercial forms which were adopted universally. Among copies of the statutes and forms of writs and covenants, one generally finds the form in which the annual balance sheet of the lord's profit and loss and capital account is to be rendered by the bailiff.

The name of the estate is engrossed on the head of the roll of parchment, front and back. Then follows the name of the bailiff, provost, seneschal, or receiver of rents, as the case may be, with the date, generally the regnal year of the king, though in the case of some monastic houses the date of the abbot's or abbess's election is substituted for the regnal year, or taken with it. Generally the date is from Michaelmas to Michaelmas, rarely a little later, more frequently a little earlier. I will illustrate the facts by the Cuxham bailiff's roll of 1316-17. The first entry is the arrears with which the bailiff is debited. Then follow the rents of assize, that is, the fixed payments of the tenants. At Cuxham, these amounted to 38*s.* 10¾*d.* In the rental they amount to 38*s.*, with a variable tax on domestic brewing. Then follows the rent of the two mills, one for grinding corn, the other a fulling mill, a proof, by the way, of the prevalence of these domestic industries to which I have referred. Next follow the corn sales, the sales of stock, the exits of the manor, *i.e.*, commutations for labour rents, sales of farm produce, except those of the dairy, which follow under the next heading, and sales of wool. Then come manorial fines on entry, heriots, the pleas of court, and sundries. This completes the schedule of receipts.

Next come the expenses. The first item is always the bad debts of the estate and the charges payable to others. Then the charge of the ploughs, the carts, small purchases, charges of the dairy, and purchases of corn and stock. Next we have the cost of the buildings. Then comes the bill for wages, for threshing and winnowing, hoeing and mowing, harvest work, servants' yearly wages, and extraordinary expenses. The last

item is foreign charges, *i.e.*, items which cannot be reduced to any of the foregoing heads. The whole is reckoned up. Then the bailiff notes the sums which he has paid to his employers, and what he has paid on their account. Among these items, but under a separate head, are occasionally tallies for wheat taken by the king's purveyor. This concludes the entries on the face of the roll.

The back of the roll contains an exact account of all the stock and produce of the farm, of all that was on it at the conclusion of the last audit, of all that has been produced in the current year, of all that has been disposed of by sale or otherwise, and of all that remains as a liability against the bailiff. Besides sales, there is the seed corn, that used for domestic consumption, and that in payments to farm servants. The tailings of the wheat—it is a year of famine—are mixed, in the proportion of two to one, with coarse barley and pea meal. The same exact account of the sale or consumption of every peck of any other kind of grain is rendered. Then follows an account of the live stock on the estate—horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry; the produce of cheese, of woolfels, and wool. Each of the several particulars is balanced after the statement, for the account is more minute and exact than any modern account. Printed in full, it requires twelve pages of closely ranged type in a full-sized octavo page.

The figures are all Roman. I have found Arabic numerals as early as the middle of the thirteenth century; but their use in accounts is not familiar before the latter part of Elizabeth's reign. This is a curious but not an isolated illustration of the conservative habits of the age in all matters of business. One would have thought that the obvious convenience of a decimal system in calculation would have commended the practice in accounts which are so minute and elaborate as those which I have described, especially as this practice of account keeping and stock taking was so general. The account is drawn up by a "clerk," who is paid a moderate fee for his trouble. The demand for the services of such scribes must have been considerable between the latter end of July and the beginning of November. Frequently similar

or analogous accounts were rendered at other times of the year, as, for instance, on the vacancy of the bailiff's office before the time of the annual audit came round, or for general stock taking over the whole estate of a noble or a monastery or a college. The bailiff's audit was only one of the numerous schedules of receipt and expenditure which were constantly being compiled. There could have been no lack of scribes during this period, and no cessation of employment. The art of account keeping and engrossing must have been very generally known, considering the demand which must have been made on the scribes' labours, and instruction must have been far more readily accessible than modern writers are apt to imagine.

Though the custom of landholders cultivating their own estates was general, it was not invariable. The corporate owners of a small estate would probably not be opulent enough to incur the charges and the risks of an agricultural occupancy, and probably let their lands, as a rule, to tenants. But even the more opulent corporations created leases on some of their estates. Thus the fellows of Merton College let their Ibstone estate for thirty-five years, and their Gamlingay estate for fourteen years from the year 1300. They let their Basingstoke estate for twenty-one years from 1310, and their Wolford estate before that date. The property which they possessed in Northumberland and Durham was let as early as 1280, and they never cultivated their estates in Leicestershire. But in all but the last, they let land and stock, alive and dead, together, stipulating that at the termination of the lease all their chattels should be replaced in good and sound condition, or that a fixed price should be paid for all that was deficient or deteriorated. This land and stock lease is so significant in the history of English agriculture that I shall have to comment on it at greater length hereafter.

Several very significant consequences followed from this all but universal practice on the part of landowners of cultivating their own estates with their own capital and at their own risk.

1. The practice made every one anxious to keep the peace and to put down marauders. Every owner of property was

interested in an efficient police. There was plenty of crime and violence in the middle ages, not a little brigandage from time to time, for highway robberies and the organization of gangs of plunderers were not unknown. But it is remarkable how very seldom one reads in these farm accounts (and I have read very many thousands) of agrarian robberies. Even in years of great dearth, such as the terrible time 1315-1321, when there was a veritable famine in England, and many perished from want, we read indeed of alarm that the dire pressure might induce thefts of live stock, but there have been no instances in my reading of that period, the evidence being plentiful, that agrarian robberies were actually committed. There is a well-known complaint of the younger Despenser about the outrages and losses which he suffered at the hands of marauders; but it will be remembered that Despenser was looked upon by a very powerful faction as a public enemy, whom it was lawful, and even meritorious, to harry. Long after the distress to which I have referred ceased, there remained a feeling of respect, even in the most disturbed times, for agricultural property. We read of no complaints of plundering during the war of succession, except when Margaret of Anjou's northern army, in the beginning of the year 1461, did not refrain from pillage; an act of folly as well as of violence, for it raised Edward IV. to the throne. The fact is further illustrated by the special characteristic of English agriculture,—the extensive maintenance of sheep. I know no reason why France, the Low Countries, and the Valley of the Rhine should not have bred sheep as successfully as the English farmer did from the middle of the thirteenth century, except in the fact that a sheep is a very defenceless animal, and needs for his continued existence that he should live without the risks of violence. It seems to me that the comparative success of English agriculture in early times is due to the general conviction that every person was interested in preserving agricultural property from theft or violence.

2. The custom which prevailed materially modified the effects of primogeniture. It is easy to explain the origin and motive of the English law of succession to real estate, though

it is not so easy to follow its growth. But during the period in which landowners cultivated their own estates, a great part of the harshness and mischief of the custom was obviated. On ordinary arable land in the thirteenth century, stock was three times the value of the land, when adequate stock and farm implements were kept upon the land. Water or warped meadow was always very valuable. But ordinary arable land, yielding, when let to farm, rarely more than 6*d.* an acre rent, was worth, to buy or sell, little more than from 6*s.* to 8*s.* an acre; while the stock on the land, live and dead, the cost of labour, and the amount of capital held in suspense, was from 18*s.* to 20*s.* an acre. Now, the younger children shared with their elder brother in the personal estate of their ancestor, unless, indeed, they were deprived of it by an ancestor's will. Hence the phenomenon of an opulent younger son is seen commonly enough during the time that the ancient custom lasted; while the appearance of the impecunious younger son, who is to be provided for by war, or the Church, or the public treasury, is synchronous with the abandonment of the ancient practice.

3. The system under which owners of land were generally capitalist cultivators must have regularly and materially assisted the distribution of land. It is true that in the time of which I am writing the ownership of real estate—often, I admit, under onerous conditions—was all but universal. A landless man was an outlaw, a stranger; one registered in no manor, a thief. There were owners of real estate whose possessions were limited to a cottage and curtilage about it, a cow's grass on the common, or at least grass for geese and fowls, since, as I have already shown, cottagers had to pay poultry rents, just as villeins at half a virgate did. But I am thinking of something more—of the necessity under which the eldest son was put of making such terms with his brothers, perhaps his sisters, as would enable them to exchange portions of the stock which came to them by inheritance or by will for the land which came to the eldest son by inheritance, and could not come to him or his brothers by will. I make no doubt that it was the custom to arrive at

these arrangements by subinfeudation—*i.e.*, by the elder brother granting the younger, lands to be held of the elder as superior lord; and that when it was thought to be public policy to put an end to subinfeudation by the statute known as *quia emptores*, it was necessary to give the owner of land full powers of alienation, in order to make it possible that these bargains should be negotiated and completed. For we do not hear of the poverty of younger sons till a far later period; and we hear of it most of all after the risks of the civil wars during the last half of the fifteenth century encouraged the extension of entails from the small and few holders of such estates to the great nobles, and further suggested the additional security of what was called a use —*i.e.*, the introduction of a trustee whose estate might endure for others, and thus the penalties of forfeiture might be avoided.

4. As the tradition of a time in which the great noble was the capitalist cultivator of land survived after the practice ceased, as is proved by the care shown for the farmer's interest, even during the heats of civil discord and actual war, so it early suggested legislative aid to the agricultural interest. The attempt so frequently made, so long unsuccessful, and so successful finally, when a combination of circumstances made it possible to make labour abundant and cheap for the farmers, was not, for a century and a half, an effort made to keep up rents in the interests of the landowners, for these were virtually stationary long after landlord agriculture had entirely ceased, but was an attempt to give the farmer a chance, and probably to increase the area of arable land by enclosures, the object of all writers on agriculture during the seventeenth century. Nor do I believe that the purpose of the landowner during the early part of the eighteenth, in the bounties and corn laws, which were enacted and extended, was his own direct advantage, except in so far as he got the lion's share in the enclosure, but was the encouragement of arable farming. Any student of Adam Smith will find that his fear that free trade doctrines could not and would not be accepted, in spite of their justice and wisdom, was not

derived from the attitude of the landowners, but from that of the manufacturing, and still more from that of the mercantile classes. In fact, it was only after the great rise in rents, consequent on the continental war, that the landowner became passionately protectionist.

5. The custom of capitalist cultivation by the landowner led again to that peculiarity in the relations of landlord and tenant which has been called the English system. Under this, the landowner was expected to do all repairs, to effect all permanent improvements, other than those which were conceived to be in the course of good husbandry, and, in the earlier days of the landlord and tenant system, to insure his tenant against extraordinary losses of stock, especially sheep. The relations of landlord and tenant began, as I shall show, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, to be unsatisfactory, particularly in the fact that good husbandry, which seems an obvious duty of the tenant, was discouraged by raising rent on the sitting tenant, to use a modern phrase, in proportion to the excellence of his husbandry, the eagerness with which he adopted improvements in the process of his art, and the difficulty he had of extricating his capital from his holding on its determination. But the principle that the landowner should do repairs, and contribute all permanent additions to fixed capital in land, has been for ages the practice, and was in early times a far wider practice than it has been for the last century. Without such a custom it would have been impossible to have maintained the English land system. Agriculture would have hopelessly stagnated, and there would have been either discontent as fierce as that in Ireland, and as violent, or the farmers would have entered into some combination which would have had the effect of establishing either a customary rent by the submission of the landowner, or one fixed by a general understanding among occupiers, and determined in the same way that trades unions fix wages and capitalists in certain industries fix prices. Combination may neutralize competition in the rent of land as effectually as it does in railway rates and in divers trades.

The lord did no repairs to the holdings of his freehold tenants or to those of his serfs. The annual accounts of bailiffs are silent about such repairs, though the rents due from cottages are duly entered along with other rents of assize. It would even seem that the rent of cottages was a payment made to the lord for permission to erect and maintain a hovel. But the amount of the rent was unalterable, and thus was an equivalent of the concession. But the fact that such tenants on fixed rents were liable to repairs on their holding—they were generally allowed to obtain the raw material from forest or close or common—was a reason why tenants-at-will or on short leases, or even on long leases, should look to the landlord for all repairs. In town houses these repairs were constantly very costly, and made the difference between gross and net rent very large indeed. On farms they would not be so considerable; but the repairs on the lands occupied by precarious tenants are found, as time passes on, and rackrenting, or its nearest equivalent, became general, to be a very serious item in the rent collector's schedule of expenses. And when we add to this the insurance of stock, which must have been a grave outlook in years when sheep-rot was general, as, for instance, in 1448, the cost to the landowner of recouping his tenant for these losses to his stock, when the loss exceeded a certain amount, might have reduced the gross rent of land to almost as great an extent as the charge for repairs lowered the actual rent received for house property in towns.

We have, as may be expected, no account of the produce obtained from the holdings of these small freeholders and serfs. But there is no reason to doubt that it was identical in character with that produced, manipulated, and sold by the lord's bailiff. The peasant's homestead, barns, and byres were the microcosm of the greater estate, and were probably quite as productive and even better cultivated. In my native village in Hampshire there was in my youth no tenant-farmer at all, though one sale of an outlying farm to a non-resident landlord was effected just before I came to the university. The holdings of these yeomen varied, the land

being generally light, from forty to eight hundred acres. But the parish contained fully twice as many homesteads as there were several estates, all with yards and barns about them, though the farmhouses had been cut up into tenements for agricultural labourers. The process of accumulation by owning occupiers had been going on for seventy or eighty years, as I learnt from the talk of old people in the village, and it is certain that if one could have gone back to the earlier rentals —the copyhold of the manor, then only a small part of the parish, was held under somewhat onerous conditions—we should have found that there were far more yeoman landholders than in the period within living memory, that there were sixty original proprietors, while in the time I speak of there was evidence of no more than thirty. In this village the system of cultivation carried on by the smaller proprietors was exactly identical with that which was practised by the larger, and the system under which labour, supplementary to that of the yeoman, was hired. Generally speaking, too, there was the same simplicity of life, unchanged, I believe, except in a few particulars, from that which was general in a far earlier age. Nor were these yeomen unprosperous when they were active, temperate, and thrifty. The greatest peril they ran was in purchasing land with their savings, mortgaging it to obtain possession, and, up to this having committed no serious error, cultivating the land with insufficient capital. I have known several yeomen, who, having fallen into this mistake, have lived a life of extreme labour and thrift, and, having enlarged their estate, were poorer at their death than they were when they began their career. And in this day I believe that agricultural distress is, and has been for some years past, due to the double cause of enlarged domestic expenditure and insufficient capital for the extent of land occupied.

In the thirteenth century there was no rent paid, in the ordinary economical sense of the word. There was no competition for holdings in that state of society in which the great landowner cultivated his property with his own capital, and the smaller tenants had a genuine fixity of tenure under traditional, customary, and certain payments. There were

occasions, it is true, in which from an early period lands were let to farm. But these tenancies, to which allusion has been made above, were land and stock leases, on really beneficial terms to the tenant; for the estimated value of the stock, or its compensation, in case the tenant failed to restore it at the termination of his lease, was from thirty to forty per cent. below the market value, unless, as is highly improbable, the stock on such land was far inferior in quality to that for which market prices are recorded. Besides, such leases were for the convenience of the landowner or from his necessity, and consequently would be negotiated on terms which were as low as, or probably lower than, customary holdings at a fixed rent. This at least is the inference which I gather from the rate at which stock and land are let together when the custom becomes general. The only apparent illustration of the existence of competitive rents is the fine which is occasionally paid for admission to the property of an outgoing tenant. Instances of the payment of such a fine are rare. It is sometimes called a fine, occasionally gersinna, or gersuma. In all cases, however, it appears to be a payment made either for entering on the estate of an ancestor, and therefore is indirect evidence that the tenancy even of a serf was of a beneficial kind, or for acquiring the exhausted or abandoned tenancy of some other occupier in the manor. But a competition which is practically limited to the tenants of the same manor could hardly be called a competition at all. These fines correspond in amount generally to the two years' value of the tenancy, which ultimately became the maximum fine on succession or alienation in manors. As I deal farther with the subject of genuine farmers' rents, I shall be able to point out when competitive rents arose, and with what consequence to the tenant and to English agriculture.

In point of fact, the rent of the tenant in the time immediately before me may have been, and probably was, in its origin, as the Dialogue on the Exchequer (i. 10) states, a license to live on and cultivate the soil, always, indeed, less than a competitive rent, and perhaps, in its beginning, a precarious tenure. But in course of time the tenancy became

permanent, the rent remaining fixed. It was as full, indeed, as could be obtained, for I find that when land is let on lease for short periods, or for life, the rent is no higher than that paid by freeholders and copyholders, but it is not as much as could be paid, seeing that the tenants were constantly able to add to their tenancies, and were frequently called upon for extraordinary payments, which could not have been yielded from a genuine rack rent. And it is a proof of Adam Smith's sagacity, that without the materials before him from which the facts could be demonstrated, he saw that rent was originally a tax, and that a long interval must have occurred before farmers' rents became real and oppressive.

I have commented above on the rents paid by the Cuxham and Ibstone tenants at the latter part of the thirteenth century. I could illustrate the topic further by quotations from rentals of a later date, and in other parts of England, from tenancies far larger in extent than those which I have dealt with, and from holdings in which serf-labour is regularly commuted for money payments. In some cases the labour rents have entirely disappeared and fee farm rents have taken their place at a very early date. This is especially the case in the north of England. But in all, or nearly all, a small amount being deducted for house and curtilage, the maximum rent paid is 6*d.* an acre. On one estate in Durham seven tenants hold over two oxgangs, each equal to a carucate, or hide, and containing at least 120 acres, four a single oxgang, and one holding thirty-three acres, a loft, and a cottage. Here there are coterells with cottages, and pieces of land ranging from nine acres to two. These instances could be multiplied indefinitely, and prove how general was the distribution of land, and how the tenant of the small estates was husbandman as well as possibly labourer, if not in his own person in that of his sons and daughters. Indeed, it is frequently found that the principal servants on a farm, the bailiff, the shepherd, and the carter, were tenants of the manor, and held land and stock, having dealings on their own account with the lord, derived but apart from their relations to him as his farm hands. Their occupation and their industry were

identical in kind, but differed only in extent from those of the lord himself.

There is a general impression that the Englishman in the days of the Plantagenets lived on the coarser and inferior kinds of grain. That most of the best wheat went to market, supplied the towns, and was even exported to foreign countries, is probable, or even certain, especially during the fifteenth century. But over the greater part of England, over all, indeed, which has come under my inquiry, even as far north as the county of Durham, the staple produce of agriculture, and by implication the staple food of the people, was wheat, though oats are also consumed as the food of man in those northern regions. From the earliest times wheat has been the principal grain on which the English have lived. No better proof of this can be given than an account of the acreage devoted to the different kinds of grain on various estates. It will be plain that the crop with the widest area was the staple produce, and had the widest market. Now the proof of this is forthcoming, for by an accident the account of the acreage, the seed sown, and the produce obtained for four years during the first half of the fourteenth century, on eleven estates belonging to one corporation, has been preserved. I say by accident, for the record had nothing but a temporary interest, and is probably one surviving from a long series of similar documents which have perished.

1. During the four years 1333-1336, Merton College, Oxford, was cultivating with its own capital eleven of its own estates. Three of them are in Surrey, one in Kent, two in Cambridgeshire, one in Bucks, one in Warwickshire, two in Oxfordshire, and one in Hants. In the first of these years 1,206 acres were under cultivation for grain; in the second, 1,315½ acres; in the third, 1,457 acres; and in the last 1,440¼ acres. But in the first year 527 acres are sown with wheat; in the second, 460; in the third, 560½; and in the fourth, 510¼; so that the acreage of wheat is nearly 44 per cent. in the first year, nearly 35 in the second, about 39 per cent. in the third, and nearly 35½ per cent. in the fourth.

The next most considerable crop is that of oats, the acreage

of which is 333, 330, 299½, and 335¼ for the four several years. Oats are very slightly the food of man in southern and central England. They are chiefly used for horses.

The two kinds of barley, ordinary barley with two rows of grain, and the coarse kind of four rows, called bigg or bere in modern husbandry, but anciently known most frequently under the name of drage, a term now entirely obsolete, occupy 263 acres in the first year, 310 in the second, 396½ in the third, 352½ in the fourth. Of these the former was used for beer almost exclusively, the latter for beer occasionally, but most commonly for feeding pigs and poultry. It entirely disappears from cultivation at about the middle of the fifteenth century.

Rye is more scantily cultivated than any of the cereals. In the first and second years, 52½ acres are sown with it; in the third, 50; in the fourth, 72. The only places where it forms a considerable crop are at Gamlingay in Cambridgeshire, and in the immediate neighbourhood of Oxford. It is occasionally mixed with wheat for the manufacture of bread. But it also disappears as a grain crop in southern and central England at or about the middle of the fifteenth century. Sometimes, under the name of mixtil, wheat and rye are sown together. During the four years under examination, 7½ acres are sown in the first, 19 in the second, 14½ in the third, and 13¾ in the fourth.

The three kinds of leguminous plants cultivated at this time, beans, peas, and vetches, occupy in the area of cultivation for the four years, 113, 144, 136½, and 156½ acres respectively. Among these is a small amount of white peas on one estate, three acres in one year and five in another. These are used for human food. Beans and vetches are horse food; grey peas are generally given to pigs. It will, I think, be clear from this analysis of farm produce that the production of wheat for human food, and barley for malting purposes, was the principal and most important part of arable cultivation. There are, however, certain other facts, which prove the same position, that the Englishman of the middle ages subsisted on wheaten bread and barley beer.

2. The monastic chroniclers constantly give, though one

must set little store by their figures, amounts of prices in years of special plenty or exceptional dearth. I have already adverted to a nearly continuous account of the harvests in England, noted by Matthew Paris, during the last fifteen years of this author's literary labours. In every case, the only grain on which the writer thinks proper to comment is wheat. What is true of Paris is true of other authors, of the notes made by farmers and corporations. Corn with them is wheat, and they note the dearness or cheapness of this exclusively, as the main or the principal agricultural interest.

3. In the research which I have made into agricultural values, the amount of information obtained as to wheat prices, whether one takes the record of production and sale on cultivated land, or that of consumption by corporations and individuals, the number of the entries of wheat and malt grains far transcends that of any other information, though the quantities and prices of other kinds of grain are sufficient, as is proved by the maintenance of the ratio of value between them, for the purposes of inference. I have collected, between 1259 and 1583, in my published volumes, 13,313 prices of wheat, 5,172 prices of barley, 4,344 prices of malt, and 6,494 prices of oats. The prices of wheat recorded in these volumes are more than double those of any other kind of grain.

4. At an early period, so early that the statute is reputed to be the oldest after the Great Charter, if, indeed, it be not earlier still, for no date is assigned to the enactment, the assize of bread was made an English law, and every locality had a police for making it effective. But the assize takes no account of any but wheaten bread, and when it is extended to malt, contemplates only that manufactured from barley. I cannot but think in the provident care which the legislature took at so early an epoch of the interests of the consumers,—a care which it has not wholly abandoned in our own day,—attention would have been given to rye, or oaten, or barley bread, if these had been in early times the food of the people.

5. With the same purpose the legislature prohibited the exportation of corn when the price of the quarter exceeded a certain amount. Thus in the year 1438-9, the petitions in

Parliament request that permission should be granted to facilitate the inland distribution of wheat and malt by water carriage, the year being one of severe dearth. The petition was refused on the ground that advantage would be taken of the concession to export English produce to foreign countries where the dearth was as severe as it was in England. But as before, the restraint is only on wheat, barley, and malt, the latter being generally sold at nearly the same price as the former, since the manufactured article fills more space than the natural grain.

6. The extreme rarity of famine in England. I have no doubt that there were local scarcities, possibly local famines, though, as I shall show hereafter, the means of communication between the producer and the market were good, and the cost of carriage, as might be expected in a country of numerous small proprietors, was very low. But I know of only one distinct period of famine in the whole economical history of England, in so far as contemporaneous and statistical evidence demonstrates the facts. This is the seven years 1315-21, especially in the first two and the last. Then famine prevailed, the people perished for lack of food, and the most conclusive proof of famine is afforded, for wages obtained a real and a permanent rise, owing to a scarcity of hands, prolonged for a considerable time, and thereupon effecting a lasting increase of wages; for temporary dearth rather depresses wages. It needs a considerable reduction in the number of those who seek employment to bring about a real increase of wages, and this state o things must last till the increased rate becomes familiar or customary.

Now it is a fundamental principle in the theory of population and wages, that the former does not increase beyond what is the customary food of the people, and that the latter do not fall below the amount necessary for the labourer and his family to subsist on, during the less advantageous part of the labour year. Hence a high standard of subsistence is a more important factor in the theory of population, than any of those checks which Malthus has enumerated. The economist who treats of the social state of any country should note in the

very first instance what is the customary food of the people. Famine is, or has been, periodical in Ireland and India, for the mass of the people in those countries feed on an agricultural produce which is the cheapest of any, and is most affected by contingencies of climate or weather. Scarcity has occurred from time to time in England, frequently in the fourteenth century; in only one year of the fifteenth, at least in any marked degree; seriously in the middle of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, being aggravated in the former of these epochs by the scandalous state of the currency; in the latter part of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries; and during the first fifteen years of the present, when, perhaps, the dearth more nearly approached famine than at any period since the great famine which is referred to above, the only example in the statistical history of England.

I have dwelt in detail on these facts, and have given this evidence of the condition of the English peasantry, in order that I may, if possible, once for all show how untenable the opinion is which doubts that, as far as the mere means of life were concerned, the Englishman of the middle ages lived in ordinary times in coarse plenty. I shall, in a subsequent part of this work, treat of his wages and their power of purchase, and of the profits which were obtained from agriculture. I do not indeed myself doubt that the comforts of all but the most destitute dwellers in cities have been increased by the growth of society and the diffusion of knowledge, that the continuity of comfort is more secure, and that the workman has shared in the advantages of economical progress. But the landowner, the capitalist, and the trader have done infinitely better than he has, and for a longer period. I am convinced that at no period of English history for which authentic records exist, was the condition of manual labour worse than it was in the forty years from 1782 to 1821, the period in which manufacturers and merchants accumulated fortune rapidly, and in which the rent of agricultural land was doubled.

Even though the lord did not reside within his manor, the principal house in the village belonged to him, and was inhabited by his bailiff. Here the court baron and court leet

were held, the former of freeholders, and concerned with civil proceedings, the latter of all tenants, free and serf, whose principal business it was to be a jury for the trial or acquittal of offenders. Such manor houses are still to be found, the building of which goes back nearly to the thirteenth century. Many have been expanded into larger homes, or been partly razed for the building of country houses, or have been turned into farm houses. In my native place the latter result has occurred; but the antiquary can discover in the walls of the yeoman's homestead unmistakable relics of thirteenth or fourteenth century work, when the house was the residence of the lord of a single manor. This manor house was generally near the church. Sometimes the church and churchyard were within the private grounds of the lord. His ancestors had probably built the church, and he was the patron of the advowson, as well as the principal parishioner. If he was the lord of other manors, he paid periodical visits to his manor house, at least to take the audit of his bailiff, perhaps for a temporary residence there.

The next most important personage in the parish was the rector. We will suppose that some neighbouring monastery has not been able to secure the impropriation of the benefice, and to serve the parish with the offices of some starved vicar or ordained monk. This rector has generally a fair share of glebe land, as well as tithes and dues. As the owner of the glebe, he is, like the rest of the inhabitants, an agriculturist; as the tithe owner, he keeps his eye on the yeoman's corn strips or closes, on his lambing fold, his shearing stead, and his poultry yard. As the receiver of dues for ecclesiastical offices, he exacts his fee, graduated according to the means of his parishioner, on churchings, weddings, and burials, claims his Easter dues from every home, and his price for obits and masses. For one of the most singular features in the particulars of mediæval estates is the permanent charges which are imposed on the tenant. We have seen what was the character of those which were exacted in the interest of the lord. Very likely the lord's estate, beyond what was due to the Crown, was charged with some payment to a monastery,

some exhibition to a college, some annual pension for a chantry, as well as with dower to a widow, and portions, to be realized from the sale of stock, or by a rent charge, for brothers and sisters.

We learn from information given us at a later period than that on which I am immediately commenting, that some of these rectors had large incomes from the benefices. Gascoigne, writing in the fifteenth century, tells of some which were worth £100 a year, and the Rolls of Parliament contemplate others at £200. These must have been parishes in which the glebe and the dues were very large, for the tithe of no ordinary parish could have nearly reached this sum. Such benefices were eagerly coveted by the monks, and were frequently, as we are told, impropriated, that is, the larger revenues from tithe of corn and wool were secured to the monastery, while the vicar was left with the smaller tithes and the fees. Sometimes, if the monastery were near, even the fees were absorbed. Thus the monks of Bicester acquired the rectory of the town, and all its ecclesiastical revenues. The record of their gains from this source has been preserved for two years of the fourteenth century. The fee for churchings varies from 1*s.* 10*d.* to 1*s.* 0½*d.*; for weddings, from 5*s.* 3*d.* to 2*s.*; for burials, from 9*s.* 3*d.* to ¾*d.* The fellows of Oriel College, Oxford, obtained the principal church of St. Mary in High Street, and derived no small part of their corporate income from religious offices, and from trafficking in wax tapers, which they manufactured and sold to devotees. It is no wonder that the king, knowing how large were the profits of the parochial clergy and the monasteries, insisted on liberal contributions from them towards public necessities, and that the clergy should have striven to obtain the powerful aid of the pope, in order to escape from these exactions.

The most important lay tenant of the manor was the miller. Every parish had its watermill,—sometimes more than one, if there were a stream to turn the wheel,—or a windmill, if there were no running water. The mill was the lord's franchise, and the use of the manor mill was an obligation on the tenants. The lord, therefore, repaired the mill,

the wheels, or the sails, and found—often a most costly purchase—the mill-stones. Sometimes the homage at the court baron supervises the contract with the local carpenter for the labour needed in constructing the mill wheel; sometimes the jury of the court leet presents the miller for using a false measure and for taking excessive toll. The miller figures in the legends and ballads of the time as the opulent villager, who is keen after his gains, and not over honest in the collection of them.

The residue of the tenants generally inhabited the principal street or road of the village, near the stream, if one ran through the settlement. There were to be sure isolated farmhouses, and these probably in early times; but, as a rule, I believe the building of these distant homesteads followed on the enclosures, and was not usual as long as the system of open arable fields remained. The houses of the cottagers were also generally in the principal street; but some, even at an early date, were in remote parts of the manor.

The parish church, even in the most thoroughly rural districts, was far larger than the needs of the population would seem to require. It is certain that villages with less than fifty or a hundred inhabitants possessed edifices which would hold a congregation of five or even ten times that number. But it will be remembered that the church was the common hall, perhaps even the common market-place, of the parish. The parish vestry is said to be the most ancient of our social institutions, and a vestry of the whole inhabitants could be summoned at the discretion of the rector. Here, too, mysteries are performed, processions marshalled, and perhaps even secular plays exhibited. When the Host and portable altar were removed, the church could be employed for all uses. Sometimes it was employed as a storehouse for grain and wool, a small fee being paid to the parson for this convenience. The tower, especially in the more exposed districts near the sea, was a place of refuge, the castle of the inhabitants. As late as the time of the Parliamentary wars, the royalists of a Hampshire town garrisoned the parish church, and stood a siege and cannonade in it.

The houses of these villagers were mean and dirty. Brick-making was a lost art, stone was found only in a few places, and, though cheap enough, was certainly not generally employed, even where it was plentiful and within reach. The better class of yeomen had timber houses—housebote was a customary right of the tenants—built on a frame, the spaces being either lathed and plastered within and without, or filled with clay kneaded up with chopped straw. The floor was the bare earth, though it was sometimes pitched with split flints. The sleeping apartments under the thatched roof were reached by a ladder or rude staircase. A few chests were ranged round the walls, the bacon-rack was fastened to the timbers overhead, and the walls of the homestead were garnished with agricultural implements. The wood fire was on a hob of clay. Chimneys were unknown, except in castles and manor houses, and the smoke escaped through the door or whatever other aperture it could reach. Artificial light was too costly for common use, for the hard fats were four times as dear as the meat of animals, and a pound of candles could only have been procured at nearly the price of a day's work.

The floor of the homestead was filthy enough, but the surroundings were filthier still. Close by the door stood the mixen, a collection of every abomination,—streams from which, in rainy weather, fertilized the lower meadows, generally the lord's several pasture, and polluted the stream. Two centuries and a half after the time of which I am writing, the earliest English writer on husbandry comments on the waste, the unwholesomeness, and the agricultural value of these dunghills.

The house of the peasant cottager was ruder still. Most of them were probably built of posts wattled and plastered with clay or mud, with an upper storey of poles, reached by a ladder. In the taxing rolls of Edward I., preserved numerously in the Record Office, the household furniture of such cottages is inventoried, and valued at a very few shillings. It consists of a few articles of furniture, generally of home manufacture, some coarse bedding, and a few

domestic implements, mostly earthenware. The most valuable articles in use were copper or brass pots, and a few common iron utensils, all metals being exceedingly dear; and iron, relatively speaking, being the dearest of all.

Rude, however, and coarse as village life was, it must not be imagined that it was without its hopes and aspirations. The serf could arrange with his lord to remove to a neighbouring town, and there prosecute his fortunes, perhaps emancipate himself. The king, when war arose, would look out the likeliest and most adventurous of the youth of all ranks, and employ them in his army with good pay, and prospects of plunder and ransom. The parish priest would encourage some bright and quick child to devote himself to the schools, to the university, to the service of the Church in the monastery, or in parochial offices. Many a peasant had heard doubtless of the learned Grostête, the son of a serf, the most distinguished scholar of thirteenth century Oxford, of the Oxford which existed long before a college was founded, —the friend of the reforming friars, the enemy of the Roman court, the advocate of England for the English; and was eager, out of his scanty means, to buy the license, that his son might go to the schools and take orders. Perhaps with these openings for himself and his kind, the yoke of dependency did not press very heavily on him. But the lord must beware of breaking the customary bargain between himself and his serf. He once attempted to do so, and a sudden and unexpected revolution shook England to its centre, and, though organized by serfs, was a memorable and perpetual warning.

I am far from forgetting that in many material points the man in our day, who lives by manual labour, is better off than his ancestor of the thirteenth century, just as he is better off than his ancestor of the eighteenth. One of the earliest objects to which wealth has given encouragement is the science of health. I do not know that they who welcomed this great change in the conditions of human life thought or cared that it should be extended beyond their own interests. To judge from the indifference with which

the housing of the poor in cities is recognised and permitted, I should conclude that the desire for health is not beneficent, even when reflection points out that for one's own sake it is better to be one's brother's keeper. I am aware also that all classes, though at a period long after that of which I am now speaking, shared the benefits of those great improvements in agriculture, under which fresh food is supplied all the year round; and that many forms of inveterate disease, which once afflicted humanity, have been banished, and life has been rendered easier and longer. The means of life were as plentiful, considering the population, in the thirteenth century, as they were in the eighteenth, the continuity of labour was secured, and the prospects of those who lived by manual toil as good. The age had its drawbacks, as every age has, but it had its advantages; and I hope to be able to show that the peasant of the thirteenth century, though he did not possess, and therefore did not desire, much that his descendant had in the eighteenth, had some solid elements of present advantage and not a few hopes of future advancement.

CHAPTER III.

RURAL ENGLAND—AGRICULTURE.

The earliest Writer on Agriculture in England—Acreage of Land under Arable Cultivation in eleven Estates—Live Stock on these Estates—Money Value of the Stock and other Capital—The Character of the Lord's Property and his special Advantages in Relation to it—Meadow, Wood, Common, Dovecots Ploughing—The relative Advantage of Ox and Horse Ploughing—The Cost of Arable Farming—Live Stock—Oxen and Cows—Sheep—Their Importance—English Wool, a Monopoly—Breeds of Sheep various—Diseases of Sheep—Rot, Scab—Remedies for their Cattle—Swine—Poultry, universal—Rabbits—Mode of Life in Rural England—Dead Stock and Tools—Cost of Iron—Tenures generally Communal—Closes in Severalty—Common of Pasture—Distress for Rent—Communal Tenure a Hindrance to Improvement—Permanent Improvement—Marl, Lime—The Dairy—Cheese, Butter—Salt—Its Benefits—Entirely produced by Solar Heat—The fairest Index of the Summer Season—The Court Days—The Harvest Time—The Highwaymen at Alton—The English Climate.

THERE is a single essay on English agriculture which was written before the middle of the thirteenth century. This essay is by Walter de Henley. The earliest copy of this work is contained in a lawyer's handy book, written at the conclusion of the thirteenth century; though a few additions have been made to the volume up to the latter part of Edward II.'s reign by a later scribe, as the book contains the Statute of York. The work is in Norman French; and the copy which I have used is considerably later than the author's own age. There is a story that it was translated into Latin by the great Bishop Grostête; and a Latin version of the work is also found. "La Dite de Hosbanderye" was a handy book of agriculture; and, as is probable, was frequently copied in one or the other language. It was not superseded till the sixteenth century, when the English work of Fitzherbert makes its appearance.

The date of Walter de Henley's work cannot be exactly ascertained. It contains a careful description of the diseases to which sheep are liable, but it makes no mention of "scab." Now we know that this disease did not make its appearance till about the beginning of the last quarter of the thirteenth century. Again, the treatise contains on the last three leaves a remarkable list of certain English towns and other localities, each of which is designated by some characteristic; and a schedule of the English bishoprics, with the various counties of which they are composed. From internal evidence, the list of towns appears to have been compiled shortly after the year 1249. The schedule of the bishoprics appears to refer to even an earlier date, as the counties of Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmoreland are grouped under the common name Northumbria. I shall have occasion to revert to this list of towns in a later chapter, and shall treat of Walter de Henley's account of English husbandry as I have occasion to refer to what was the actual practice of the agriculturist.

As I stated in the preceding chapter, wheat was cultivated on every estate, a larger breadth being sown than there was even on those which cultivated rye. The following is the acreage of all the land under tillage in the eleven estates referred to before. At Maldon the average under cultivation for the four years is 268½ acres; at Leatherhead, 148¾ acres; at Farley, 182 acres; at Elham, which was chiefly a horse breeding estate, 15¼ acres; at Cambridge, 86½ acres; at Gamlingay, 153¼ acres; at Cheddington, 123 acres; at Wolford, 72¾ acres; at Cuxham, 181⅝ acres; at Holywell, Oxford, 118½ acres; and at Basingstoke, 100¼ acres. The average amount of arable land in cultivation on the whole eleven estates for the four years is therefore 1,448½ acres. The same inventories give us an account of the live stock on the estates. Horses are found everywhere. But there are others called stotts, a word used at Maldon and Cambridge only, and affers, a word used on all the estates except Elham. Both probably mean the breeds of coarse large ponies, which are occasionally found in country places at present. The average on all the estates is thirty horses, eight stotts, and thirty-eight

affers. These animals are kept principally for draught, but were probably employed for ploughing also. The average number of oxen and cows kept on ten of the estates is 215, Elham possessing none. No sheep are kept at Elham, Holywell, and Cambridge. But on the other eight estates an average of 1,133 sheep and lambs are kept in stock, the largest number being wethers. They are known as ewes, muttons, hoggs, rams, and lambs. About 9 rams are kept to 287 ewes. An average of twenty-one calves is given in the audit. There are on an average 159 pigs, and 137 store pigs. There are in the same way 246 geese, 146 capons, 281 fowls, and 103 ducks.

The stock does not, it is clear, represent the maximum of the year, but the amount on all the farms at the date of the audit. The list, therefore, does not account for the sales nor for the purchases. But the enumeration is not only suggestive of the amount of stock on a series of estates, but it shows how general stock keeping was, how necessary it was to have other resources for maintaining such a stock beyond common pasture or the balks in the open fields, and that there must be implied in the amount of arable land occupied by the tenant a considerable further area of several pasture. These were the crofts and closes, which are generally added to the virgate or half virgate of the freeholder or serf.

Taken at the average values of the four years, the live stock on the farms, as accounted for by the several bailiffs, is of the money value of £291 19*s.* 1½*d.* But the same record informs us that the average floating balance left in the several bailiffs' hands was £115 12*s.* 8½*d.*—a sum in live stock and working expenses of £407 10*s.* 10*d.* The dead stock and seed amount to at least £200, and the rental of the land alone to £75 more. The capital invested in the farm buildings, mills, and similar property cannot be less than £800 more, so that a capital sum, in fixed and floating form, of more than £1,482 was required in order to take in hand and manage properly the amount of 1,448 acres of land in cultivation on an average of years. Now, in the period before me, arable land was not worth more than fourteen years'

purchase,—*i.e.*, land yielding 6*d.* an acre rent was worth about 7*s.* an acre,—and, as the foregoing calculation points out, the stock, capital, and buildings on an arable farm were three times the value of the land when taken apart from their necessary conditions. Even if we omit the buildings and rent, the necessary floating capital is considerably in excess of the value of the land, and the position which I laid down before is worked out, that the system of landlord cultivation, with its vast amount of floating capital, divisible in equal parts among the representatives of a common ancestor, and open to distribution by will, must have considerably modified the effects of the custom of primogeniture.

Speaking generally, the arable lands of a manor were divided pretty equally between the lord and the tenants of the manor. There were, however, certain advantages possessed by the lord, some of them of very solid significance indeed, some vexatious and injurious to the tenants rather than profitable to him.

1. Whenever there existed natural meadow, regularly warped or watered by streams, it was, as a rule, the property of the lord, and held by him in severalty. In the entire absence of all artificial grasses and winter roots, this kind of land bore a very high rent. About Oxford it is constantly let at 7*s.*, 8*s.*, or 9*s.* an acre; aftermath, or rowens, called *rewannum* in its Latinised form, being let at 2*s.* 6*d.* Now, taken generally, the value of grain has risen about twelve times in nominal value since the period before me, and such water meadow as let at the high rates referred to five or six centuries ago has risen to from about £4 4*s.* to £5 10*s.* an acre—*i.e.*, in about the same proportion, while ordinary arable land has risen from fifty to sixty times. For the same reason—viz., the singular importance of water or natural meadows—sales of hay are very rarely found in the bailiff's account, though they are occasionally seen in the account of consumption by nobles and great corporations. In later times, when nearly all the information procurable as to prices is from the records of consumption, entries of the price of hay are common enough.

2. The tenants of the manor had a right generally to the use of wood from the lord's timber for the repair or enlargement of their homesteads, for their agricultural implements, and, to a limited extent, for their fires. On the other hand, as we have seen, they are prohibited from cutting oak or ash, even on their own holdings, without the lord's consent. Now it was generally the case that the manor contained, especially on its boundaries, a considerable and extensive belt of wood. For example, the northern slopes of the South Downs were generally covered with beech woods, and the higher grounds on the north were similarly overgrown with coppice, oak, and ash. The sales of fuel from this wood were a very considerable source of income to their owners. After the great rise in prices occurred, during the latter half of the sixteenth century, though rents remained provokingly stationary, the profits of coppices and forests were a welcome advantage to landowners, who often found in the rise on the price of their woods that there was some compensation for the stagnation of agricultural rents. Besides, they got payments for the grass in the spring, and the pannage of pigs in the autumn. One can quite understand, then, how indignant the nobles in the seventeenth century were, when the examination and claim of the Crown's forestal rights so seriously lessened the estates of some among the nobility, and greatly curtailed a lucrative source of income. Of course, much wood and forest was held by private owners and in severalty.

3. Generally the use of the common pasture was without stint—*i.e.*, any tenant could put as many beasts as he liked on it. It is a common subject of complaint that the lord, being possessed of several meadows, saved his pasture for hay or summer feed, and cropped the land bare by the multitude of cattle and sheep which he put on the common pasture. Such a common without stint exists still near Oxford, in the large space known as Port Meadow—a piece of ground which belonged to the inhabitants of Oxford as long ago as Domesday, the sole use of which was subsequently usurped by the citizens, who, indeed, after the city got its

charter, were the principal, or at least the permanent, residents in the borough.

4. Generally, also, the lord had or claimed the right of erecting a dovecot or pigeon-house on his demesne. Prodigious numbers of these birds were kept, and though they doubtlessly plundered the lord's fields, they must have been a greater nuisance to the tenants. Even if there were no evidence of the number accounted for in the bailiff's roll as sold or sent to the lord, the price, about a farthing each, would show how common they were. There was hardly a manor without its dovecot. The right to keep a pigeon-house was confined to lords of manors, who could punish in their own courts any one who imitated their practice. When, as was sometimes the case, the same parish contained two or more manors, the loss and inconvenience must have been great to the other tenants' crops. In the year 1332, the bailiff of one estate accounts for the sale of nearly 700 pigeons.

An estate under the plough was divided into three parts, and the ploughing of each part had its own name. Ordinary ploughing was undertaken in the autumn, and was called hyvernagium; the second plough-time was in April, and was called warectatio; the third was at midsummer, and was called rebinatio. The last should be undertaken when the ground is dusty. The furrows should be a foot apart, and the plough should go two digits deep, no more. Now in order to traverse this space of an acre, there will be thirty-three journeys made. Walter de Henley advises thirty-six. It will be found that the whole space traversed in order to plough two acres will be nine miles—he says six leagues; and he says that it would be a poor stott or ox which could not do an acre in a day. He concludes, therefore, that a carucate of land, *i.e.*, the amount which a team of horses or oxen could plough, is from a hundred and sixty to a hundred and eighty acres in the year, taking forty-four weeks in the year, and omitting eight for marketing and other hindrances. By this he means, not that a team is engaged in ploughing all the year round, but that if it were so engaged, it would cover the space of an acre a day. But he is willing to allow three and

a half roods for the first, and one acre for the second ploughing.

Land should be ploughed three times, unless it be such a soil or such parts of the soil as will bear a crop every year. After sowing, the young plants should be hoed, and drawn out of the furrows to the ridge. Always get seed from some other estate. If you doubt my advice, try half your land with foreign seed, half with that of your own growth, and you will see the wisdom of my counsel. Plough with two oxen and two horses together. You will do better than with horse ploughing alone, unless the ground is very stony, when oxen find it difficult to get a grip at the ground with their hoofs. During the time of ploughing, whatever be its kind, the farm bailiff, or head reaper, or head man, should be constantly about the plough, to see that the serf do his work well; see at the end of the day's work what they have done, and that they keep up to the amount every day afterwards, unless they are able to account for a deficiency by some hindrance. Servants and customary tenants shirk their work, and you must be on your guard against their rogueries. Besides, the head reaper must look after them daily, and the bailiff see to them all that they do their work well, for if they do not they should be chidden and punished.

The ox was considered a far cheaper and, on the whole, more effective animal for the plough and for other kinds of farm work than the horse, though it is true that ploughing by horses is speedier. The cost of a horse between Oct. 18th and May 3rd, the period during which they cannot graze, was reckoned as nearly four times that of the ox. Besides, when an ox grows old, he may be fattened for the table, and his hide will fetch a good price, whereas there is no such economy possible in a horse, whose flesh is useless and hide of little value. Oxen were shod, though the shoe is far cheaper than that of the horse.

The agriculturist of the thirteenth century was quite alive to the importance of stock keeping. When you can do so, says my author, stock your land to the full extent which it will bear, for you may be certain that if your land be well

stocked, if your stock be well kept and properly handled, your land will give you a threefold return; by which I presume is meant over arable farming only. I shall be able hereafter, by an examination of the balance-sheet of farms, to show what was the rate of profit obtained.

The cost of arable farming in the thirteenth century, when the crop is wheat, is thus reckoned:—The land is ploughed thrice at the cost of 6*d.* an acre; hoeing costs 1*d.* an acre; two bushels of seed at Michaelmas, 1*s.*; a second hoeing, ½*d.* an acre; reaping, 5*d.* an acre; carriage, 1*d.* an acre. The straw or forage will pay for the threshing. In this account of the cost, taken from Walter de Henley, no estimate is made of rent; but my author infers that at 4*s.* a quarter, unless more than six bushels are reaped, there will be a loss on the operation of 1½*d.*

The hoeing of land was generally undertaken by women. There was full opportunity for this employment till the middle of the fourteenth century, after which the outdoor employment of women almost disappears for a long time. In harvest time, women worked at piece work, as the men did, and generally at the same rates. I refer to these facts at the present time only to illustrate the course of husbandry, not to anticipate what I have to say on the wages of labour and the general condition of those who lived by hired labour, at least in the main.

I have already referred to the amount of stock kept on 1,448 acres under the plough, and bearing crops. It is now desirable to deal with the several kinds of animals kept on land.

Oxen and Cows.—The ox was kept for plough and draught, a few were kept for fatting, but I conclude that the amount of stock regularly fatted for the table was a very small percentage of the whole. They would be consumed only by wealthy nobles and wealthy corporations, and, as a matter of fact, fresh beef was put on table only for a few months in the year. Much was killed and salted in November, but this beef was of grass-fed cattle. The ox, quit of skin, head, and offal, did not weigh on an average more than 400 pounds, and was

worth about 11*s.* to sell. The hide of an ox was worth at least 2*s.*, and the head and offal amply paid the services of the butcher. The meat was therefore worth about a farthing a pound. It was lean, for the hard fats were worth four times the price of meat; and tough, for it was neither young nor stall fed. Whatever stock the agriculturist could not keep during the winter or dispose of to opulent consumers in town and country, was killed, and put into the powdering tub at Martinmas.

There was no attempt to improve breeds of cattle. The proof is the low price of bulls. A collateral proof is the low price of cows. The ox was valued for his work and for his flesh. The maintenance of the bull was a necessity, and the use of the cow was for the dairy. At the same time I do not assert that there were not different breeds, but I am sure that the difference was in the size, not in the quality of the animals, and that there was no distinction made in the character of the breeds. In point of fact, the scarcity of winter food and its poor nutritive powers, the absence of all winter roots, even carrots and parsnips, and the change from the scanty pasture of the summer to the straw-yard in the winter, must have brought about that all breeds were on the same level in point of size and quality, unless they were the few animals kept for the consumption of wealthy persons.

Sheep.—The mainstay of English agriculture was the sheep, at once for the profit which its wool supplied, and for the value of its droppings to the fields. It is well known that England had virtually the monopoly of the wool trade from the earliest records till at least the middle of the seventeenth century. The unrestrained export of wool, by which I do not mean the taxation of the export, but the permission to export under a heavy customs duty, more than once determined the policy of the Low Countries, and was the subject of numberless diplomatic arrangements. If supplied freely and plentifully, the Flemish burghers throve accordingly; if it were curtailed or prohibited, discontent was sure to arise in those manufacturing towns of the middle ages. The burgher life of Ghent, Bruges, Malines, a thousand towns, depended on

this important raw staple. It is almost the only article, as far as I have been able to discover, on which an export duty could be put, the whole of which was paid by the foreign consumer. Financiers have always desired to find some product possessed of those qualities which will, without harm to the domestic producer, render it possible for the foreign consumer to inevitably pay a tax levied on the material. The conditions are four :—It must be a necessity ; there must be no substitute for it ; there must be no other source of supply ; and there can be little or no economy practised in the use of it. Such an article in the middle ages was English wool. It was a necessary material for clothing, and no other material could be used in its stead. It was produced, efficiently at least, in no other European country, for the Spanish wool, scanty in quantity, was so weak a fibre that it could not be woven without an admixture of the English material, and the Saxony supply was not yet developed. And although it is possible that the dearness of woollen garments may have led to some economies in their use, these could not have been considerable. Hence the Government was able to constantly impose, in times of emergency, a cent. per cent. *ad valorem* duty on the export of average wool, such, for instance, as the produce of Lincolnshire, Gloucester, and ordinary Hereford. The foreign wars of the Edwards and the Henrys were carried on mainly by the proceeds of wool taxes, and the enormous revenues which from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries were exacted from England by the Papal Court and the Italian ecclesiastics who were quartered on English benefices, were transmitted in the shape of wool by the Lombard exchangers to Flanders, and thence by a cross exchange to Italy.

There were a great number of breeds of sheep, and it is evident that pains were taken to improve the breed. This is proved by the high price of rams, whom our forefathers called hurtards (the butters) ; very often much more being paid for rams than for the best wethers. There is other testimony to the fact in a remarkable petition presented to Parliament in 1454. The Commons present a schedule of forty-four qualities of English wool, designated by the locality of their

origin, the money value of which ranges from £13 the sack of 364 lbs. for wool grown near Leominster, the highest, to that of £2 10*s.* the sack for wool grown in Sussex, the lowest. And the prayer of the petition is that no quality should be exported, except at the prices in the schedule, under a penalty of £40 the sack. The petition was rejected. Now in the fifteenth century it was a very common expedient for Parliament to impose an export duty of 100*s.* the sack on wool, without distinction of quality. But it was not found to be so easy to put export duties on the last of hides, another important English export. To have imposed too high a duty on hides would have driven the trade to other countries. I have no doubt that these forty-four kinds were so many brands, as we should say, of English wool, which were fully recognised in the Flemish market, and I am the more convinced of this because the names of some of the qualities are taken from very narrow districts.

The wool was coarse and full of hairs. I say this because I have seen cloth manufactured from fourteenth century wool, in which the quality of the raw material is very discernible, though from the use made of it the cloth was almost certainly the best procurable. The fleece, too, was light, an average from many entries which I have made giving 1 lb. 7¾ oz. to the fleece. But the unimproved sheep of the eighteenth century gave nearly 5 lbs. to the fleece. Hence the animal must have been small, and I think I may certainly say that a wether in good condition weighed a good deal less than forty pounds.

The sheep master was liable to heavy losses on his stock. I mentioned above that an average of 1,133 sheep of all kinds was kept on eight of the sheep-breeding estates. In one year the losses were 308 ; in another, 242 ; in a third, 300 ; in a fourth,—a more fortunate year,—34. But the average is 221, or close upon 20 per cent. of the stock. No doubt there were considerable losses in lambing time, but the rot made the most serious ravages. Our forefathers, who comprehended all cattle diseases under the generic name of murrain, were well aware of the risks they ran from rot, and give the symptoms

with the precision of a modern farmer. "There are," says Walter de Henley, "several means by which shepherds profess to discover the existence of rot:—(1) They look at the veins under the eyelids; if they are red, the sheep is sound; if white, unsound. (2) They pull at the wool on the ribs; if it holds firmly to the skin, the sign is good; if it tears off easily, it is bad. (3) If the skin reddens on rubbing, the sheep is sound; if it keeps pale, the animal is rotten. (4) If in November the hoar-frost in the morning is found to cling to the wool, it is a good sign; but if it be melted, it is a sign that the animal is suffering from an unnatural heat, and that it is probably unsound." Experienced farmers have told me that it is not easy to better the exactness of these symptoms. The farmer of the earliest period had a vague idea that the presence of a small white snail on the grass was dangerous, and the most modern experiments have proved that a water snail is the carrier of the fluke. Our forefathers advised that sheep should be kept under cover from November to April, and should not be allowed to go on the ground between mid-August and November, till the sun had well purified the ground. They were fed under cover on coarse hay, wheat and oat straw, or, failing these, on pea or vetch haulm.

The most valuable product of the sheep, his fleece,—and the fleece is often worth half the value of the animal when shorn,—was liable from the latter part of the thirteenth century to a new disease, the scab. We can almost define the year—1280—in which this disease first appeared, by the simultaneous record of the medicines employed for its cure. At first the agriculturist tried sulphate of iron, verdigris, mercurial ointments, and occasionally arsenical washes. Soon, however, the use of these articles was abandoned for that of tar, which begins to be imported for this purpose in the southern and eastern counties at the end of the thirteenth century, after which it was used as a specific for all skin diseases in sheep. "The shepherd," says a writer of the early sixteenth century, "should never be without his tar-box."

The hardships of the winter must have generally baffled the efforts of the husbandman to improve his breeds of sheep.

It appears that the goodness of wool in England is not so much a matter of breed as of soil, and I am told that the localities which supplied the best English produce in the fifteenth century and in the centuries before that period are characterized by analogous excellence in the nineteenth. The sheep were washed; the wool appears to have been sorted or picked, for "locks" and "refuse" are always at a much lower price than the rest of the fleece. Black wool, used for russet and dyed cloth, bore as high a price as white wool, and lambs' wool is generally a great deal cheaper than that of the sheep.

Sheep were occasionally hired to lie on the ground. This must evidently have been done in enclosures. A hundred and fifty sheep were folded on an acre at from 1*s.* 4*d.* to 2*s.* the acre, or two hundred sheep were kept on a field at 8*d.* a week, for eight weeks. It would seem, then, that such a flock was kept on land from three to eight weeks, in order to fertilise it, the owner, of course, feeding them.

Swine.—It is to be expected that swine were, for general use and consumption, the most important object of all English agriculture in the thirteenth century, and for many a century afterwards. The pig is a saveall, a universal consumer, and as universal a producer. It was kept by the peasantry throughout the whole parish; the sow, during farrowing time, in the sty, the only period, except during that in which the animal was fatted, when it was of any immediate cost to the owner. The object of the agriculturist was to have his herd in such a position as that there should be three farrowing times in the year; and we are expressly informed that care was taken in the selection of breeds.

The pigs were the scavengers of the mediæval village. In the autumn they were turned into the cornfields after the crop was carried, and into the woods to gather mast and acorns. The ringing of pigs, in order to prevent their uprooting the ground, was known, though not perhaps universally practised. The whole of the parish stock was put under the charge of a single swineherd, who, receiving a payment from the owner of every pig under his charge, had a smaller wage from the lord of the manor, to whom he was also a

servant. It is said that the pannage of pigs, *i.e.*, the practice of feeding hogs on mast and acorns in the woods, was not a matter of original right, but had to be granted by deed. But the concession was very general, and the payment was ordinarily fixed at a penny or halfpenny for each head of swine. Pigs are often said to be leprous; but most of the diseases to which they are liable are classed under measles, properly entozoa. Three centuries after the time on which I am commenting, the pious and patriotic Tusser recommends that when the disease is very prevalent, the animals should be slain, salted, packed, and the pork sold to the Flemings.

The fatted boar was a lordly dish, and though often the principal item in the Christmas feast, was even served up at Midsummer. Large quantities of barley, bere, beans, and peas were consumed in order to bring these animals into condition. But ordinarily the pig in the sty was put into saleable form at the cost of from two to four bushels of grain. The boar sometimes consumed ten times the larger amount before he was ready for the feast. Store pigs, when ordinary food was scarce, were fed largely on brewer's grains, which were purchased at a few pence the quarter. But as every peasant was frequently brewing ale,—it will be remembered that the drink was not hopped, and was therefore of rapid consumption,—such food was generally forthcoming. Some idea can be formed of the condition of the ordinary pig from the fact that the lard of thirty-five of these animals was a little over five pounds a piece. The meat was, as now, salted as pork or smoke-dried as bacon. Wild boars are occasionally mentioned; and it may be added that salted or smoked pork was slightly higher in price than other kinds of meat, certainly than other kinds of salted meat. There can be no doubt that, in the thirteenth century, every peasant had his pig in the sty.

Poultry.—It is even more certain that he had his fowl in the pot. Poultry keeping was universal, and poultry and egg rents were the very commonest form of rendering dues. Fowls are found everywhere, the cocks rather cheaper than hens, and pullets cheapest of all. Geese and ducks were also well-

nigh universal, the former called green when they were stubble fed, but often put into coops and fattened on oats. Capons, which are exceedingly common, are about double the price of ordinary poultry, being always fattened in coops. That they were found everywhere is shown by the fact that "capon's grease" is constantly used for cart wheels and sheep dressing. In modern times, one might as reasonably prescribe hare's fat as so costly a lubricant. Swans and peacocks were occasionally kept by the wealthy, and were sold at high prices.

It may not be amiss to refer here to the singularly high price of rabbits. I am convinced that they had lately been introduced to the country; that they were found in very few localities, and were often procured from a considerable distance. In the last half of the thirteenth century a rabbit was often sold at one-third the price of a wether. At the end of the fourteenth, they were as dear as geese, were purchased at a spot which was more than sixty miles from the place for which they were procured, and were carried at considerable cost. The rabbit warren is known to Fleta, but it is not mentioned in Domesday. It may be added that the bailiff, who is ready to explain any extraordinary cost or failure, has never, in the thousands of accounts which I have investigated, set down losses to the ravages of ground game. I may add, too, that, save in years of exceptional dearth, he rarely speaks of losses of poultry by theft, though he has to account for all deficiencies in stock,—a pretty clear proof that his neighbours, even the poorest, had similar property of their own, and were therefore interested in a police over property, or were removed from the temptation to pilfer.

Such was the live stock of the mediæval farmer, whether he were landlord or peasant. I have taken for granted that the husbandry of the peasant was like that of the lord, and that the servants of the manor house, save that they were more secure in the income which they received in wages and allowances, lived with and in the same manner as their fellow villagers. Except that the thirteenth century villager was greatly better off, there was little change induced on the rustic's condition in many parts of England from the middle of the

thirteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Sixty years ago there was many a village, in the south of England at least, which was out of the way of the great high roads, in which few of the yeomen knew how to read and write, and scarcely one of the labourers. For five centuries and a half, for fifteen or sixteen generations, there was no appreciable alteration in the condition of these people. The discipline of the manor court had passed over to the justice's room, and perhaps was more severe after the custom, that no one could be prosecuted as an offender except at the action of his peers, was exchanged for the information of the master, the game-keeper, or the constable. The village weaver made homespun cloth from the hempen or woollen yarns a century ago as he did six centuries ago. The year witnessed the same unvaried round of occupation that it was when the third Henry was king. Only there was a change in the land of the parish, now generally enclosed. The ancient rights of the villagers were extinguished as these several properties were created. But in many parishes the loss of communal privileges had long been forgotten. In one place, the enclosure might have dated back to the age of the last Plantagenet; in another, to that of the Tudors. If the commons had endured beyond these several spoliations, or some residue of them had been left, they were gradually absorbed by those numerous Acts of Parliament which, beginning with the age of Anne, were the principal private bill legislation of the eighteenth century. Now and then the peasantry had risen in insurrection against those who invaded their ancient privileges. There had been the uprisings of Tyler, of Cade, of Kett. But since the days of the clubmen, the dwellers in rural England have been apathetic.

Changes of dynasty, civil wars, changes in religion, had occurred without making a break, or leaving a memory in the routine of rural existence. The church of the mediæval village became the church of the Reformed Establishment. The parish priest of the old faith was succeeded, though with a greatly shorn income, by the rector of Cranmer's and Cromwell's, of Parker's and Grindal's, models. Sometimes, perhaps, in the days after the Reformation a more than ordinarily

opulent ecclesiastic, having no family ties, would train up some clever rustic child, teach him, and help him on to the university. But, as a rule, since that event, there was no educated person in the parish beyond the parson, and he had the anxieties of a narrow fortune and a numerous family. The villagers frequented the same ale-house as that at which their forefathers had caroused for generations, held the parish feast on the same day—generally the name-day of the church, or of that on which the parish guild was founded—as that which had been set apart when the old church was a new one, or the guild was started in the days of the third Henry, or in those of his great-grandson, or during the prosperous epoch of the fifteenth century; and, except for slow, trivial, and insensible changes, everything was continued as it was when the beginnings of that constitution were effected, outside which the mass of Englishmen remained, or from which they had, in the fifteenth century, been excluded. There is, I believe, no part of the Western world in which so little change was induced on the fortunes, on the life, and on the habits of the people, as there has been in rural England from the peaceful reign of Henry III. to the earlier years of George III.

I stated above that one of the estates from which I have taken my facts as to the husbandry and live stock was employed for the breeding of horses. In one year of the fourteenth century, the bailiff of this estate buys twelve horses for 157*s.* 9*d.*, and sells them for 180*s.* 8*d.*, besides getting rid of eighteen of his own rearing. These were cart or ordinary saddle horses. The war charger was a much more expensive affair, and frequently cost more than a dozen others.

Dead Stock and Tools.—The estate of Holywell, Oxford, the whole of which, with the exception of some twelve acres, possessed by a monastery, and a few tenements inhabited by cottagers, was the property of one owner, lay outside the north wall of the city. It had been possessed by its owner in severalty, and had been enclosed in the middle of the thirteenth century, and was about two-thirds arable and one-third pasture, the latter being regularly warped by the Cherwell. The pasture, as I have stated above, was very valuable

and the land, lying near a great city, fortress, royal palace, and university, was as well placed as land in the middle ages could be. Oxford was a favourite residence of the first Angevin king. Two of his sons were born there, and the palace occupied a considerable space in another district to the north of the city, from which point, indeed, the place was alone assailable. But a legend had grown into shape, that a residence in Oxford was dangerous to the English king, and the palace was almost deserted in the thirteenth century.

The arable land under cultivation in Holywell was, on an average, nearly 120 acres. It was divided into at least twelve corn fields, six of which were called furlongs. The principal articles employed on the farm are:—Four iron-bound carts, and four cart frames, with four sets of rope harness; four forks for lifting trusses, and one long one for the rick; three ploughs, six iron dung-forks, three hoes, a reaphook and a scythe, two mattocks, two wheelbarrows, a seed cod, two axes, a saw, two winnowing fans, three pairs of leg chains, divers measures and kitchen utensils, three milk buckets, a butter churn, three cheese vats with cheese cloths, and a variety of other articles. Of these the most costly were the carts. Speaking generally, the dead stock on the farm must have been worth in money of the time at least £25. The inventory was made up on the occasion of the appointment of a new bailiff, and is an exhaustive account. But it was the practice to enumerate the principal articles on the farm in the annual roll.

The most formidable item of expenditure in the supply of necessary dead stock was the annual cost of iron. Relatively speaking, iron was considerably dearer than lead, and frequently nearly as costly as copper, tin, and brass. It was generally bought, whether it were of English or of foreign origin, in bars of about four pounds in weight. This was ordinarily purchased at one of the great fairs, and carefully preserved by the bailiff, being served out for the local smith to fashion into what was needed, and the weight being debited to him on each occasion. Sometimes, but rarely, it is bought in mass. Steel, which was employed to tip the cutting edges

of iron tools, was four times as dear as iron. Over and over again, the bailiff seems to apologize for the large consumption of iron in his ordinary operations, by the dryness of the seasons, and the consequent wear of the material. The high cost of iron explains the fact that cart-wheels were frequently unprotected, being made from the section of a full-sized tree. Again I must repeat that harrowing with a frame set with stout iron pins was unknown or unpractised. Nearly three centuries after the time on which I am writing, when the practice was generally known and adopted, the principal writer on English husbandry states that the agriculturist cannot afford iron-toothed harrows in stony ground, and recommends the use of strong oaken pegs in their place. The share, too, must have been a very slight affair,—I judge by its price,—little more, indeed, than an iron point to a wooden frame, the frame being protected by clouts or plates of iron nailed to it. The principal source of foreign iron was Spain, the produce of which was about one-third dearer than that of home manufacture. What is called Osemond iron is as dear as steel, and appears to be identical with it. The cost of working iron or steel into the requisite implements was about as much as that of the raw material. The shoes with which horses and oxen were shod were exceedingly light.

The arable land of the manor was generally communal, *i.e.*, each of the tenants possessed a certain number of furrows in a common field, the several divisions being separated by balks of unploughed ground, on which the grass was suffered to grow. The system, which was all but universal in the thirteenth century, has survived in certain districts up to living memory, though generally it gave way to enclosures, effected at a more or less remote period. The system has been traced back to remote antiquity. The ownership of these several strips was limited to certain months of the year, generally from Lady Day to Michaelmas, and for the remaining six months the land was common pasture. The communal cultivation had its advantages for the poorer tenants, since the area of their pasture was increased. But at the latter end of the seventeenth century it was denounced as a wasteful and

barbarous system, and wholly unsuited to any improved system of agriculture.

In Fitzherbert's treatise on surveying, a work of the early part of the sixteenth century, a description is given of these communal districts. The work, though two centuries and a half later than the period on which I am speaking, deals with a system which is of immemorial antiquity, and was probably entirely unchanged from what had prevailed in the earlier epoch. There is, he says, a field, which he calls Dale Furlong, in which the several inhabitants have "lands." In this field the parson has two strips, the lord three, a tenant one, another two, a third one, the lord four, the prior two, the parson one, a fourth tenant two, a fifth one, a sixth one, a seventh two, the prior three, the lord two and one headland, the parson having the other. The rest of the fields, of which he gives four names, are similarly divided.

He then treats of a long meadow containing 122 acres, which is similarly staked and bounded. This appears to be devoted to hay, and the several tenants mow and stack their portions. In this typical manor there are also closes of various dimensions. Every husbandman, in addition to his share in the communal field, has six of these closes,—three for corn, and the others for pasture and hay. The rental of the communal land is sixpence an acre, of the enclosed eightpence, the difference in the value being derived from its being possible to let oxen lie on it. This rent illustrates what I have said above as to the average rental of arable land. It is unchanged from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century.

Besides his several closes, and his use after harvest of the communal fields, the husbandman had access to three kinds of common of pasture:—(1) In many places, where closes and pastures exist in severalty, there is often a common close, taken in out of the common or fields by tenants of the same place—and I conclude by the action of the homage—for oxen, kine, or other cattle, in which close every man is stinted from the lord downwards. (2) The plain champaign country, where the cattle go daily before the herdsman, this lying near the common fields. Here again each person who has the right

of use should be stinted; and a suggestion is made that the principle of the stint should be determined by the extent of the tenant's holding. (3) The lord's outwoods, moors, and heaths, which have never been under the plough. Here the lord should not be stinted, for the soil is his; but his tenants should be, for they have no certain parcel of this district annexed to their holdings, but only bit of mouth with their cattle. The stint of cattle, we are told, is necessary, in order to prevent the rich man from buying sheep and cattle in the beginning of summer, getting them into condition, and selling them, all the while sparing his own pasture, and so defrauding the poor man. As an equitable adjustment of the stint, it is proposed that the tenant's right should be proportioned to the amount of cattle which he can maintain in the winter from the amount of hay and straw housed during the season from his several holding. These passages make it clear that the interest of the mediæval tenant was by no means limited to the acreage with which he is credited in the manor survey; and that, under proper regulations, his common of pasture was necessary and valuable.

The division of communal fields into lands, or regular plots of equal length and breadth, as far at least as the unit is concerned, of which the several owners had multiples, necessitated, after the practice of tenant farming became general, an accurate survey and terrier of the different interests in the field. As long as cultivation was carried on by the owner, whether lord or tenant, identification was easy, and boundary disputes rare. But when the occupier ceased to be the owner, a great deal of care and frequent visits were necessary to prevent fraud or encroachment. The owner of one strip in freehold might be the tenant on a short term of years on another strip, and would be strongly tempted to edge on his landlord's property. This is curiously illustrated by some of the bad debts which landowners made in later times. They had defaulting tenants, whose property was insufficient to meet the debts which they had incurred. But the remedy of distress, the common law process, by which the lord could recover his rent, appears to have been available only on the

land from which the rent issued; and if by any means the boundaries of it were lost or obscured, the landowner might be unable to recover, because he could not find the precise spot from which his rent issued. Now it was a common practice in later times to let different strips for various terms; and thus the tenant, not taking his holding in the aggregate, but piecemeal, could with difficulty be dispossessed. It also became difficult to discover, unless the area of the several strips was accurately registered, to find out what plot was liable for overdue rent. I have constantly found, in the accounts presented by rent collectors, that arrears extending over a long period of years, especially in the fifteenth century, are described as not recovered because the collector cannot identify the land from which the rent issues. It was, I believe, to meet such contingencies as these that the old remedy of distress was supplemented by the action for covenant and the action for debt; and thus that the rights of the landowner have been made a far more secure debt than they were under the ancient system.

The system of communal tenure, it must be admitted, was hostile to permanent or even transient improvement, because it left the personal advantage of outlay on such land insecure. The argument may be pressed with great force in favour of the tenant under the modern system; and it is certain, as we shall see hereafter, that as soon as ever it was possible to apply new methods of cultivation, and to enhance by such methods the natural capacity of the soil, the complaint arose that the landlord entered on the benefit of the tenant's improvements, deprived him of them by the exaltation of rent, and therefore discouraged agriculture. This complaint, which begins in the sixteenth century, is exceedingly common in the seventeenth, when English agriculture was making rapid progress.

Still, improvements were made in the thirteenth century. These consist of ditching, draining, and ridging wet land, of marling and claying stiff or poor soils.

Ditching was generally contracted for by the pole, and, to judge from the price, a pole of ditching was about a day's

work. I should gather, however, that this is not the cost of the first construction, but of subsequent cleansing. Draining was practised on wet lands by digging a trench and laying angular stones in the cavity, or, in some cases, by setting an arch of stone through the length of the trench, provision being made for an exit into the ditch, or even by laying hollowed alder stems in the trench. Ridging was practised on wet arable land or meadows, and sometimes the ridge is raised to a considerable elevation. This is the most indestructible of agricultural improvements; and districts may be found where, time out of mind after arable cultivation has ceased on the land, the artificial ridge of the ancient field is as marked as ever.

Much more important, however, is the marling and claying of light and poor lands. If in marls the proportion of calcareous matter is large, it is said to be a good dressing for clay soils; if the amount of clay is large, it is good for light, sandy soil. It was extensively adopted at Maldon, in Surrey, one of the eleven estates on which I have so frequently commented; the operation extending over thirty-seven years, and nearly 143 acres having been gradually treated in this manner. Maldon is in the sandy district of Surrey.

It was a costly operation. It appears that about one hundred loads were spread to the acre, and that the cost—I am speaking of Maldon only—was from 3*s.* to 3*s.* 6*d.* an acre, that is, nearly half the value of the fee simple of ordinary arable land. Sometimes it cost more to the acre, the charge rising in the case of one estate to 7*s.* an acre, and in another to nearly 8*s.* The effect in altering the texture and increasing the fertility of the soil was supposed to be very great, and the value of marl pits was generally recognised. There is no reason to doubt that the freehold and copyhold tenants, whose rents and services were fixed, followed the example of the lord in improving their property, especially as the cost of carriage, owing to the fact that so many beasts of burden, relatively speaking, were kept, was exceedingly light.

Writing two centuries and a half afterwards, Fitzherbert tells us that the most useful process for mending ground is

marling, and that generally, when such a material exists within convenient reach, marl pits have long been opened. Latterly, he adds, the practice of marling has become uncommon. Two causes are assigned for this change of agricultural custom. One is "that tenants"—he is speaking now of tenants at will, or on short lease—"be so doubtful of their landlords, that if they should marl and make their holdings much better, they fear lest they should be put out, or make a great fine, or else pay more rent. And if a lord do so, meseemeth he is unreasonable, seeing that it is done all at the cost of the tenant, and not at his. The second cause is that men be disposed to idleness, and will not labour, as they have done in times past; but it meseemeth a freeholder should not be of that condition, for he is in a security, for his chief lord cannot put him out doing his duty. And he knoweth well that he shall take the whole profit while he liveth, and his heirs after him; a courage to improve his own, the which is as good as he had purchased as much as the improvement cometh to. And one man thus doing would give other men the courage and a good example to follow the same. Marl mends all manner of ground, but it is costly." He goes on to say that in Cheshire and Lancashire the process of marling has doubled the value of the land.

While marling was the expedient, according to the quality of the article, for sandy land and some kinds of clay, lime was employed for the destruction of moss and some kinds of insects, and for altering the texture of heavy clays. Lime was manufactured, the owner supplying kilns, fuel, and raw material, at about 1½*d.* the quarter, or at about 2*d.* the day, when the service is not paid by the piece, and the operation was carried on at bye times of the year. I find no record of the amount needed for the acre; it probably varied, and was frequently employed as a dressing. Our forefathers seem to have sometimes committed the error of mixing it with stable dung, and thereby of liberating the ammonia in their manures. The sort of liming of course varies with the proximity of the estate to chalkpits or limestone.

The Dairy.—Cheese and butter were abundant and cheap. The proof is that, except kitchen stuff, butter is the cheapest

of the fats. Both appear to be produced on every farm. But information in detail, such as the statistician would require, is defective. Cheese is generally sold by tale, not by weight. It is made up into three shapes, great, middle, and small, and the weight of the aggregate is rarely found. So, again, butter is frequently sold in pats. Again, it was a common practice to let out the cows, the owner supplying food, at 5*s.* to 6*s.* 8*d.* a year, and the ewes at about 1*s.*, to the dairyman, who had the calves, often repurchased by the bailiff, as part of his bargain. The dairyman, or deye, engaged to restore the animal in sound condition at the end of the year. Here it is worth noting that such a bargain implied not only a power of contracting on the part of persons whom the law books describe as having no rights of their own against the lord and his agent, but the possession of a considerable amount of private resources on the part of the contractor, who is generally a farm servant. The custom, in short, is proof that the condition and means of persons who entered into hired service on annual wages and allowances with the lord's bailiff, were far better than anything of which our modern experience informs us as to the condition of farm labourers in our time, or, indeed, within recorded memory. Butter was worth about three farthings, cheese about a half-penny the pound. It appears that butter was occasionally melted, as it is sold frequently by the gallon. This may be accounted for by the high price of salt.

The manufacture of cheese generally commenced at Christmas, and was continued to Michaelmas. Within these nine months, two cows should produce, in fair pasture, a wey (224 lb.) of cheese, and about 19 gallons of butter. It seems, then, that cheese was made of skimmed milk, or, at least, that a portion of the butter was abstracted from it. If the pasture is light, as in woods, meadows after mowing, or in stubble, three cows were required for the same produce. Now, says Walter de Henley, if a cow produces, as it may, 3½*d.* worth of cheese and 1*d.* worth of butter weekly, its gross annual return, deducting the cost of keep, will be 9*s.* a year, and, therefore, it is strongly advisable that cows should be kept. Ten ewes

were considered to be equal in productiveness to one cow. Goats, for obvious reasons, were rarely kept. In the open country they would have been entirely unmanageable.

Rennet was employed (generally the produce of the farm, but occasionally purchased) for manufacturing cheese. The curd was put into a vat and pressed through cloths. The charge for vats and cheese-cloths is found on every farm. The cheese thus manufactured seems to have been sold at once, if possible, in the nearest town, and the sale was continued through the whole season. It appears that the produce of certain dairies was stamped, not probably as evidence of quality, but of ownership. It was the practice, as I have said, to make cheeses into three shapes. These seem to have been, to infer from the prices, six, four, and two pounds respectively. In a later period we find very different qualities of cheese, the practice being to make them into larger shapes. The best cheese at this time came from the eastern counties; the cheapest from the southern.

Butter is generally sold by the gallon. Of course this may have been salted and pressed into earthenware pans or small barrels, which were very cheap,—the art of the cooper, like his name, being universal,—or, as I have suggested, it may have been melted. Its use for purposes which could hardly bear salt argues that the melting of butter was not unknown. At any rate it was abundant.

Salt.—In connection with these articles of agricultural produce, salt should be referred to. It was a matter of necessity to an extent which we cannot conceive, and the acquisition of a good quality of the article was as important as its cheapness and plenty. For five or six months in the year, our ancestors, at least the majority of the people, lived on salted provisions. The wealthy had game, fish from their stores, and even fresh meat from their farms, though the latter in varying quantity; for it was plainly a piece of extravagance to habitually consume fresh meat in the winter. But the mass of the people had to live on salted meat, or to go without meat at all. The pig was doubtless the principal food; but salted beef, and even mutton and poultry, were

common articles of diet. The usages of the Church prescribed that just before the coming of spring all should live on salted fish, and, as a consequence, there was a great and most important trade in salted sea-fish, the earliest maritime adventure being directed towards the discovery of new and more abundant fishing-grounds. Now, in the absence of all winter roots and herbs, beyond a few onions, a diet on salted provisions, extended over so long a period, would be sure to engender disease, even though the salt were of the best quality; and as a matter of fact, scurvy and leprosy, the invariable results of an unwholesome diet, were endemic, the latter malignant and infectious, in mediæval England. The virulence of these diseases, due, in the first instance, to unwholesome food, was aggravated by the inconceivably filthy habits of the people.

The salt, however, with which the provisions were seasoned made matters even worse. It was entirely produced by solar evaporation in the southern counties, in so far as it was an English product. That the Romans made use of the brine springs of Worcestershire and Cheshire I can well believe; that the English did not, before the beginning of the eighteenth century, I am quite certain; for the best authorities at the time, those on the spot, declare they did not. English salt, therefore, was full of impurities. It contained, or was likely to contain, all those salts which the skill of the modern chemist easily separates from the staple product. It contained sand and dirt besides. "White" salt was very properly a good deal dearer than grey or black salt; salt that was used for the dairy than that which was supplied to the servants. Great or bay salt was the dearest of all English products.

The acquisition of salt, therefore, from such foreign regions as could supply a purer article, was a great consideration. Such a supply could come from the south-west coast of France. As long as Guienne was parcel of the English Crown, and trade was regular between the district and England, salt and wine were the principal exports to this country. In 1450, Guienne, after being annexed to the

English Crown, though with some interruptions, for three centuries, was lost. The French king, knowing how important the export of salt and wine was to England, ventured on imposing an export duty on these commodities. The Gascons rebelled in 1452; and were supported by the English Parliament and the force under Talbot for very good reasons. Talbot and his son were slain at Chatillon in 1453, and Guienne was irretrievably lost. Thenceforward the English kings strove to negotiate commercial treaties in which the free exportation of the salt of Guienne was stipulated for.

I have said that English salt was always produced by solar heat. The proof of this fact is to be found in the exaltation of the price when the summer was wet. The price of salt is even a better index of the rainfall during harvest time than the price of wheat; for the latter might recover, even when August rains were heavy, since it was cut high up on the stalk; but the lost heat was never regained. The stocks were generally, it would seem, larger; and the exaltation of price is always, or nearly always, seen in the year following on the agricultural scarcity. In what was a matter of necessity, this was to be expected.

My reader will be now able to construct for himself the picture of an English village in the thirteenth century: of its timber or stone manor house,—brick-making, we must remember, was a lost art, and was not revived till the middle of the fifteenth century,—of the rough buildings in which the peasant owners lived, and the still ruder huts of the peasant labourers. From childhood to old age, all labour. There is no change in their career, their industry, their experience, from generation to generation. Sometimes, indeed, an enterprising or favoured village youth quits his rustic home, and, successful in war or the Church,—a Sale or a Wykeham or a Fox,—is knighted or raised to episcopal dignity and such wealth as to enable him to say, as Fox is said to have predicted, that the whole village would not serve for his kitchen. But though a few persons became opulent in the middle ages,—exceedingly opulent by way of contrast with their countrymen,—the mass of men in the rural districts were

removed equally from excessive poverty and from the prospect of much wealth. They could and did make their savings add strip to strip, accumulate the wages of the harvest, and—there being little to tempt them to expenditure—constantly invest their earnings in plots of land.

Doubtlessly the court days, when all were summoned on pain of fine for non-appearance at the manor hall, to serve on the homage or court leet as the case might be, were occasional breaks in their monotonous lives. There they presented scolds for wrangling; there the miller who took advantage of his monopoly was indicted and punished; the widow was allotted her charge on the land; the baker or brewer, who had broken the assize or outraged the discipline of the manor, was fined; ambitious fathers bargained for permission to send their sons to school; and mothers got leave to marry their daughters. The labourer who is defrauded of his wages is permitted to distrain on his employer's goods and even household chattels; and poachers are mulcted for their offences. Sometimes the whole parish strives to emancipate itself from the obligation of grinding its corn at the lord's mill, and is amerced for so heinous a breach of manor law. The common carrier is summoned for failing to deliver goods trusted to him, and is constrained to make compensation. A woman is fined for harbouring a stranger in her house. A son comes into court, and, on succeeding to his father's tenement, not only fines in a mark for quiet entry, but acknowledges that he is bound to pay an annuity to his mother for her whole life—of a quarter of wheat, another of barley, another of peas, and forty pence; proffering, as sureties for the due performance of his obligation, two other residents. The parish priest is generally the peacemaker. These courts are held about three times a year, and seem always to have had a day's business to do.

At harvest time, again, there is a glimpse of the outer world. The lord of the manor comes to take audit of his bailiff's doings through the past year, and perhaps to reside temporarily in the manor house. The parson hires labour, superintends the reaping of his own lands, and collects the tithe of

the produce into the huge barns which stand by his manse on the close of his glebe. The busy Benedictine from some convent is there, to watch over the harvest of his portion and to look covetously on the rector's lands and tithes, with a view, if possible, of getting the impropriation of the benefice out of the hands of the secular, and into the grasp of the regular, clergy. Sometimes the parish is visited by the begging friars, the revivalists of the thirteenth century, now in the height of their reputation for piety and self-abnegation, and therefore encouraged to contrast their labours with the lives of luxurious monks and worldly clergymen. When the harvest is over there are processions to the village cross, hard by the church, with thanksgivings for past benefits, and with litanies deprecatory of real or impending calamities.

Grave offences against life and property are exceedingly rare, else the penalties inflicted for these would have been recorded in that exact and faithful transcript of the year's accounts, the bailiff's roll. But it is quite likely that though the little community was generally at peace within its own borders, and property was so generally distributed that none was imperilled, it heard with indifference that strangers were robbed on the high roads, and was even pleased that the foreigner was not allowed to have his way in England. An incident in Matthew Paris is so characteristic that I am induced to quote it at length, the more so because it is strange that so curious a narrative is omitted from the current histories of England. The scene is Winchester and Alton in Hampshire, two places which are equidistant from what is probably the scene of the transactions in question. The date is 1249.

The king, who had taken the whole conduct of affairs into his own hands, and had neither Justiciary, Chancellor, nor Treasurer under him, was residing in Winchester during Lent, when two merchants of Brabant complained to him that they had been robbed of two hundred marks in money by certain highwaymen, whom they thought they could identify. The culprits were arrested, and being put to the test of compurgation, were set free by the oaths of their own

neighbours. The whole county was an accomplice in the robbery, and was agreed to convict no one; so that the efforts of the judge to detect the scandal were fruitless. The despoiled merchants pressed the king, assuring him that the Duke of Brabant would certainly grant reprisals against English merchants in Flanders, and thus amicable relations, then of great importance, between England and the Low Countries would be seriously interrupted, or at least imperilled.

So the king summoned the bailiffs and freemen of the county of Southampton to him. Looking angrily at them he said, "What is this that I hear of you? The cry of those who are robbed reaches me, and I must needs come down. There is no county or district in the whole of England so scandalous or so stained with crimes as yours. Even when I am here, in this city, its suburbs or its neighbourhood, robberies and murders are committed. Even this is not enough. My own wine in my own casks is stolen by grinning and drunken thieves. I am ashamed and disgusted at the abominations of this city and its neighbourhood. I was born in this city, and yet have never been so dishonoured in any place as here. It is probable, credible, nay, all but certain, that you are confederates and accomplices with these criminals. But I will deal with you. Shut the gates, and let none go forth!"

After certain expostulations from the bishop, who was present and excommunicated the offenders, a jury of twelve was appointed out of Winchester and Hampshire men. They were kept under strict custody, and held long debate. Summoned at last, they could make no mention of the thieves. The king was exceedingly enraged, for he knew they were well acquainted with the facts. So he cried out, "Seize these cunning traitors, and put them heavily ironed into the lowest prison. They are concealing what they ought to tell. Then choose another jury of twelve from the same district, who will be willing to tell the truth." After a long and secret colloquy, these came forward, and disclosed the crimes and offences of many persons from Alton and the bishop's liberty of Tanton. The result was that many persons of substance,

numerous bailiffs and servants of the king, and some even of the king's household, were convicted and hanged. Among these thieves was one William Pope, whose house, when searched, was found to have no less than fifteen tuns of wine in it. More than sixty were executed for their offences. Such brigands must have lurked in the numerous forests which covered much ground in the south-west, centre, and north-east of Hampshire. The villages, however, would have cared little for the calamities of a Flemish merchant or a papal collector. The story, moreover, illustrates the state of society and the process by which justice was done through the agency of a jury of witnesses and compurgators.

The winter and the summer were in violent contrast. The former was dark and cheerless, for the cost of artificial light was disproportionately high—a time in which the peasant lived perforce on unsavoury and unwholesome food. Such clothing, too, as could be obtained was inadequate to repel the cold. Hence the chroniclers comment on severe winters as the most serious calamity of the year. But, on the other hand, the freshness and glory of spring was heightened by the rudeness of the season which it followed. The earliest English poetry is that of the spring-time and its surroundings.

It is probable that the summer of the thirteenth century, and for some generations later, was better than that of modern experience. Wheat was grown much farther north than it was in the eighteenth century. Vineyards are found in Norfolk, and wine, manufactured from English grapes, is sold at a price not much less than that given for ordinary Bordeaux. There are traditions of similar plantations over many of the southern counties. In the fifteenth century, wine was made in Devonshire, and in the sixteenth, after the dissolution of the monasteries, a vineyard of five acres is scheduled as part of the possessions of Barking nunnery. In the thirteenth, as in the nineteenth century, the danger of English agriculture was in unseasonable wet in summer. A wet harvest is the cause of every famine and dearth in the agricultural history of England.

CHAPTER IV.

TOWN LIFE.

Many Roman Colonies survived the Saxon Conquest—Many grew up round Monasteries, some Ports—Southampton in the Twelfth Century—Charters granted to the Towns—List of English Towns in the Thirteenth Century, with the Characteristics of each. The Guilds—were possessed of a Monopoly—adopted and Enforced Apprenticeship; supplied a Military System to the Towns, and in London gave great Political Influence; were Benefit Societies; had to be cautious how they admitted Serfs—London, a perpetual Market—Attachment of Londoners to the City—Trade in London Illustrated by a particular Purchase—Political Activity in England—Relative Opulence of London in 1341, 1453, 1503, as compared with other Towns—Population of the Principal Towns in 1377—Difficulties in the Estimate of Population—The Population of England and Wales, and the Principle on which it has been Estimated—Population and Occupations at Colchester in 1301—The whole Population engaged in the Harvest—The Commerce of the Towns.

DURING the slow progress of the Teutonic invasion and occupation, many a Roman colony perished. The sites of some are now entirely lost, and some have been recently, as Uriconium, Silchester, and the like, discovered. Roman England was dotted over with villas, the foundations of which are now and then exposed in places which have long since been abandoned to tillage. Saxon England was not a settlement of towns, but of villages and communal customs. Even most of the bishoprics were settled in places which never could have been considerable. The seat of the bishop whose jurisdiction extended from the Humber to the Thames was an Oxfordshire village, which grew round an ancient monastery, founded within the walls of a Roman town. The Bishop of the West had his see at the hamlet of Crediton, that of the Central and East at Elmham. A few were from the first placed

in the ancient colonies of Roman England, as at London, Winchester, York, and Worcester.

Even if the names did not prove the fact, some of the cities of Roman Britain clearly survived the ruin of the second conquest, and must have had a continuous existence. The sites of London, of York, of Lincoln, Winchester, Exeter, Chester, Gloucester, and several others could never have been abandoned. In the fragments of history which throw a little light on the annals of the petty Saxon kingdoms, there are a few hints of the independent existence of London, and of a corporate vitality there. This was to be expected. Unless the town offered an obstinate resistance, the invaders might well be content to spare those places which they had no mind to occupy. It is true that the desolation of Roman Britain was more thorough than that of Roman Gaul; but it is more than probable that the towns which the Saxon tolerated he found useful afterwards; that the Saxon king discovered in these towns some means for strengthening his authority, and that Edward the Elder was not the first king who made the successful merchant "who had passed thrice over the sea by his ówn means" thegn worthy. From various notices in the Codex Diplomaticus, London appears to have been included in the kingdom of Mercia. Nor can it be doubted that when the intercourse between the England of this and even a remoter age and France began, men learned about the Roman municipalities which survived. These became the patterns of the chartered towns which were so numerously enfranchised in the early Plantagenet period.

Many of the English towns grew up round monasteries. The piety of the converted Saxons led them to spend lavishly in the foundation of these institutions, and the principal part of the documents which have been preserved from a period antecedent to the Conquest refer to these early monasteries. Thus the town of Oxford grew up under the shadow of the great monasteries of St. Frideswide and Osney. Such was the origin of Abingdon, of Reading, of St. Albans, of Coventry, of Durham. Some, when trade was developed or restored, owed their existence to the convenience of the site for com-

merce. Such must have been the origin of Southampton, which migrated from the Roman Clausentum to the eastern side of the Itchen; of Bristol, and of Norwich. Some were the havens of fishermen, as Yarmouth, Grimsby, and Scarborough. In the beginning of Richard the First's reign, Southampton must have been a thriving town, for the possessions of God's House, a charity for decayed merchants, founded in 1189, were exceedingly extensive. The hospital holds houses, shops, and lands in the parishes of Holy Cross, St. John, St. Michael, St. Lawrence, All Saints, St. Mary's, and in the district outside the Bars. In point of fact, Southampton was the chief port of southern England, with which the principal part of the French trade was carried on, especially that in wines. It did not recover for many generations the ruin which fell on it when the French landed and burnt it on October 6th, 1338. The names in the Southampton rental of the twelfth century imply a considerable population of foreigners, especially of Flemings; and it appears from documents that there was a constant immigration from North-west Germany into the Eastern Counties.

The towns which depended on the Crown were liable to certain annual payments, which were collected by the sheriff. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the custom began of entrusting the town with the collection of its fee farm payments, and of confirming and enlarging the jurisdiction which the authorities of the town had over their own burghers. These were granted very extensively by Richard I. and John, and generally contain exemptions from harassing and vexatious charges, the right of self-government, of the election of their own officers, and the power of forming guilds and enacting bye-laws for their government. The municipal privileges of London are even recognised in a charter of William the Conqueror. Most of the charters are confirmations of privileges which were alleged to have existed from ancient times. The permanent and fixed sources of income which the Crown enjoyed from these chartered towns were occasionally charged with payments to other permanent institutions. One of the principal sources of income pos-

sessed by the King's Hall of Cambridge, the predecessor of Trinity College, was a portion of the fee farm rent of the town of Scarborough.

In a lawyer's handy-book of the thirteenth century, the compilation of which was clearly made at or about 1250, and which contains the earliest copy which I have found of Walter de Henley's work on husbandry, though, as the corrections show, it is a copy of a still earlier original, is a list of English towns and similar places, each with some marked characteristic annexed to it. Thus we have the Baronage of London, a phrase which seems to point to that period in the earlier recorded history of the great city when the artizans and traders were struggling against the dominant influence of the local nobles, and the Fitzosberts were seeking to give method to their discontent and their efforts. The relics of Westminster, the pardons of St. Paul's, the approach to Thorney, perhaps the enclosure of the old Palace of Westminster, if not the isle of Ely Abbey, and the prostitutes of Charing, designate the characteristics of localities near London. With the exception of Berwick, York, and Chester, no place north of the Humber is named.

Oxford is renowned for its schools, Cambridge for its eels—a proof that the list was compiled before the latter University was recognized. Manufactures of cloth are noted:—Scarlet at Lincoln (Nichol); blanket at Bligh; burnet at Beverley; russet at Colchester (eight weavers are enumerated at this town in the rolls of Parliament under the year 1301); produce of linen fabrics at Shaftesbury, Lewes, and Aylesham; of cord at Warwick and Bridport, the latter being also quoted for its hempen fabrics; of fine bread at Wycombe, Hungerford, and St. Albans; of knives at Maxstead; of needles at Wilton; of razors at Leicester. Banbury is distinguished for its drink, Hitchin for its mead, and Ely for its ale. Gloucester is the mart for iron, Bristol for leather, Coventry for soap, Doncaster for horse girths, Chester and Shrewsbury for skins and furs, Corfe for marble, Cornwall for tin. Grimsby is famous for cod, Rye for whiting, Yarmouth for herrings, Berwick for salmon, Ripon is a horse market, as it was in the sixteenth

century, and gloves are bought at Haverhill, while oxen are sold at Nottingham, and, unless I am mistaken, saddlery at Northampton.

Southampton is famed for its navy, Norwich for its harbour, Stamford and Dunstable for inns. Some towns are indicated by uncomplimentary characteristics—as the robbers of Alton, in allusion, doubtless, to the story of brigandage in that neighbourhood recounted in the last chapter—butchers at Winchester, and villeins at Tamworth. The plains of Salisbury, the hot springs at Bath, the cloister at Lichfield, the marvel of Stonehenge, the passage of Chelmsford, the ferry of Tilbury, the warren of Walton, the prairie of Waltham, the mills of Dunwich, the forest of Sherwood, the chase of Englewood, the forest of Windsor, the manor of Woodstock, the castle of Dover, and the marsh of Ramsey, are natural or artificial objects which made the localities famous. The courage of the Cinque Ports probably refers to the battle with Eustace the Monk in 1217, when these ports bore the brunt of the struggle, and made the cause of Louis of France hopeless.

The inhabitants of these towns were merchants and artizans. London was, no doubt, from the earliest times wholly unlike any other English town, as well for its magnitude, its opulence, as for its singular political importance, for its military defences, and for the energy with which it strove to free itself from the overpowering influence of the magnates within its walls. But the essence of the mediæval town was the formation of the guilds of merchants and craftsmen; and if the town was large enough, of craftsmen who represented each and every calling which was carried on in the locality. There was every motive for the creation of these guilds, for the establishment of rules for their private governance, for jealous supervision over those who had the privileges of these corporate bodies, and for care lest an unauthorized person should intrude on what was a valued right, which might be and was watched with suspicion and alarm by other forces in the state.

1. Within the limits of the corporation, the guild had the monopoly of manufacture or trade. Such a privilege was

entirely in accordance with the fundamental characteristic of these societies which constituted the parish or manor of rural England. There were no strangers in the manor. It was an offence, punishable with fine, to harbour one. If a tenement changed hands, it was generally to some other villager. For generations it was no easy matter to import a stranger; and when competitive rents began, this virtual exclusion of strangers checked for a long time the development of such rents. In the same way, and from the same ancient feeling, centuries after the period on which I am writing, the first law of parochial settlement, under which the peasant labourer was formally declared to be *adscriptus glebæ*, or a serf without land, who might be debarred from seeking employment in any other place than that of his birth or settlement, and dragged back to his native field of labour, did not seem unnatural or unjust. It was not, therefore, remarkable that, apart from the obvious but secondary motive of self-interest, the guild should number its members on the lines of a register in the decenna, or tithing, and should put effectual hindrances on the introduction of strangers. Membership in a guild was a birthright, an inheritance.

2. But it was also a great advantage. The members of the guild had paid good money for their privileges in their collective capacity. They had, as individuals, contributed to the common stock, not, perhaps, always in fair proportion, for the contribution in all likelihood, as in modern times, pressed hardly on the poorer among the fraternity; but the privilege was all the more valuable because it had been gained by solid sacrifices. They alone who were of the fraternity had the right to manufacture and sell within the precinct. They took care that this right should not become obsolete. They insisted, as one of the hindrances to the too free distribution of the privilege, that new-comers should undergo a long period of servitude or apprenticeship. This custom, or innovation, which was rightly interpreted by Adam Smith, required that a considerable time should elapse before the workman or trader should be able to set up for himself, his services during the time of his apprenticeship being the

property of his master. The object of the rule was to restrain competition, and the restraint was further enforced by limiting the number of apprentices which the master could take. The rules of trade were copied by the Inns of Court and the Universities, who enacted that no one should be free to practise in a court or to lecture in the University till seven years had elapsed from his entrance to the initial privileges of the order. In some corporations it was prescribed by byelaws, which had the effect of public laws, that the apprentice should work for a period after his probation had elapsed as a journeyman to his employer. He was a freeman to the guild, but not in the trade. Hence the celebrated statute of 5 Elizabeth was merely declaratory of custom, was in reality only a re-enactment of 7 Hen. IV., with the fact that the machinery for enforcing the law was applied.

3. The organization of the guilds bestowed that military system on the London artizans, and similarly on the guilds of other trading towns, which the circumstances of the time seemed to demand. The London apprentices and train bands were a force, not indeed considerable enough to withstand the charge of regular soldiers, as was proved at the battle of Lewes, but as good as the militia, and for purposes of defence entirely adequate on ordinary occasions. The wealth of London was great, and naturally provoked the angry comment of Henry III., when, in 1248, his "parliament" of nobles having refused to assist him in one of his recurrent straits of poverty, and his foreign possessions being wasted, he sold his plate and jewels for what they would fetch, and found they were bought in London: "I know that if the treasure of Imperial Rome was to be sold, that London would take and buy it all. These London clowns, who call themselves barons, are rich to loathing. The city is an inexhaustible well." And so he bethought himself of spoiling the citizens, and the citizens to arm the companies, till at last they ranged themselves on De Montfort's side in the civil war, as they had nearly fifty years before taken part with Langton and the barons in the exaction of the Great Charter.

During the many political dissensions of the middle ages

the side which London took was always in the end, and generally at an early period, victorious. To pass over the uprisings in the reigns of John and Henry, they joined in deposing Edward II. and Richard II. They put away the House of Lancaster in 1461. When the rapacity of his courtiers and the poverty of his exchequer led the guardians of Edward VI. to despoil the guilds in the country towns, they were prudent enough to spare the possessions of the London guilds, which still exist, though with very different objects from those for which they were first incorporated. The indignation of the robbed and ruined traders overset the calculations of Northumberland, extinguished the project of setting Jane Grey on the throne, though she had a parliamentary title, and affirmed the right of Mary Tudor. The adherence of London to the cause of Parliament during the long struggle which began with the book of rates, and was concluded by the battle of Naseby, made the issue of the conflict manifest to all foresighted persons. And lastly, when Charles was bent on despotism, and discovered the best means by which to attain his ends, at least for a time, he employed legal chicanery to rob the citizens of their liberties, which he never could have destroyed by violence. The situation of the city was doubtlessly very strong. It was protected on the north by extensive marshes, on the south by the river and a lofty bank, on the west by other fortifications and the Fleet stream. But the strength of mediæval London lay in the sturdy determination and military spirit of its citizens. For centuries it held the balance of power in England.

4. The guilds were the benefit societies in the middle ages. It does not follow that they were under a legal obligation to relieve their destitute members, as they are in those modern cities of Europe in which the guild system has continued to our own day, as at Munich. But it was a common practice for the wealthier members of a guild to give or devise sums of money to the guild, the proceeds of which were lent without interest to struggling members of the fraternity, adequate pledges or securities being exacted from the borrowers. Such gifts were frequently made to the University of Oxford in its

earlier days, the trustees being the University officials, and the money being deposited in chests or hutches in the University church, where also the pledges were left. The college in Oxford which is now reputed the earliest, though its incorporation was much later than that of Merton College, began with the proceeds of such a hutch, limited to a certain number of beneficiaries. These gifts are common in London and other cities, both to guilds and parishes, and constitute a large part of their estates, purchases of real estate being made with the benefactions which belong to the companies and the parishes, often from nameless donors. Still more frequently the members of guilds devised lands, tenements, and moneys, the proceeds of which were to be charged first with the cost of religious offices for the repose of the dead, the residue being devoted to the common purposes of the guild. Sometimes the benefactor founded an almshouse for destitute or decayed members of the guild, their widows and orphans. Such almshouses, though unconnected with guilds, were founded near Canterbury by Lanfranc and Anselm in the reigns of the Conqueror and Rufus; by Henry de Blois, near Winchester, in the reign of Stephen; and by Stephen's wife, Matilda, in London. The condition that prayers should be said for the deceased was the plea on which those guild lands were confiscated in 1547, though the court did not dissolve the London companies, and the colleges in Oxford and Cambridge were allowed to retain their chantries discharged of the trust. Besides these funds, there were fines on admission, payments for membership, and penalties for breaches of the corporation bye-laws. The accumulation must have been considerable at an early date, for in the fourteenth century two Cambridge guilds contributed from their funds to found a new college in the University. The origin of the trading companies, their revenues and their statutes, are almost exactly like those of academical colleges.

5. The guilds had to be careful in the bestowal of their privileges. Residence for a year and a day in a corporate town precluded a lord from regaining his serf; and we have seen that the lords, by exacting an annual fine on absentees

of base origin, were not remiss in claiming their rights. It might have been dangerous for the guilds to openly defy the feudal lords by making their fraternities an asylum for runaway serfs. We may conclude that not only selfish motives, but those of reasonable prudence would have made them cautious in welcoming strangers. Still they would not put up with an invasion of any right which was or seemed to them clear in the case of any enrolled member of their order. In 1381, Sir Simon Burley gave no slight stimulus to Tyler's insurrection by imprisoning a Gravesend burgess on a plea of villeinage. It is not easy to see indeed how the suit against a runaway villein could be prosecuted, except he had taken refuge in a town.

6. London was a perpetual market. If goods were sold in open market, it is an ancient custom that the owner of stolen property has no remedy against an innocent purchaser. Hence it was throughout the year what the great fairs were at stated intervals. The market for heavy goods, especially of foreign origin, was below the city walls on the river wharves. Within the city walls were great open spaces, now built over, no doubt because the tolls of these markets were the property of the city, of individuals, or of companies; spaces like those which are still to be seen in Nottingham and Norwich, the last of which cities in the thirteenth century was only second to London, though at a great interval behind it. London, in fact, was a perpetual fair, the localities of whose trades are still discernible in the Cornhill, the Cheapside, the Poultry, the Leadenhall, or designated in literature, as Bucklersbury and Smithfield are.

7. Macaulay, in a well-known passage, has dwelt upon the intensity of feeling with which a Londoner looked upon his city and its privileges at the conclusion of the seventeenth century. The feeling must have been keener in the thirteenth and fourteenth, when it did not contain a population of over 40,000 persons, even before fire and plague had desolated it. The streets were narrow, and the upper stories, projecting from the timber frames, nearly touched each other. But in the rear of the houses were trim gardens, in which the citizen

sat in the summer evenings. I have often noticed the charges to which corporations are put in repairing the fences and walls in the gardens of their London tenements. These gardens are now occupied by courts and lofty buildings, the value of which is estimated by the square foot, the rental of one such court being in nominal amount equal to the whole fee farm rent which London, in the middle ages, paid her Plantagenet kings. But London in these times was a *rus in urbe*, as nearly all the walled towns in England were, the inhabitants of which were densely enough packed in the buildings which they occupied, but had open spaces in abundance within the walls, and in the ward without, the western outskirt of the city. The attachment which the merchant princes of the seventeenth century felt for London was a feeble sentiment beside that which the "barons" of the thirteenth entertained towards their home and their stronghold. There was little opportunity for handsome houses, or for costly furniture, such as might be seen in the Italian cities, perhaps in Flanders and the free towns of the Rhine; the tale of domestic goods is scanty and mean, but the burghers accumulated wealth, which they liked to expend, as the piety of the age dictated, in handsome churches, in splendid presents to the shrines of saints, and in the pomp of religious worship. Fitzstephen, a century before the time of which I write, is eloquent about the opulence of London, and how it constantly recovered after the disastrous fires with which it was frequently visited. The churchyard of the great cathedral might be in ordinary times the burial-ground of the whole city, as its vast aisles and nave were for the chief citizens, the ecclesiastics on its establishment, and some of the nobles; but there were numberless city churches and monasteries where space was ample for all the burials of the inhabitants.

There is an entry in one of the accounts of Cuxham which, with very little effort of the imagination, may give one a picture of those daily mercantile transactions of magnitude which were carried on in London. In the summer of 1331, the lords of Cuxham and Holywell determined to make an extensive purchase of the best millstones procurable for the purpose of sup-

plying their mills at the village and at Oxford. These stones were formed probably from the chert which is found in the neighbourhood of Paris, or were perhaps quarried at Andernach on the Rhine, the two localities from which, it appears, the best foreign millstones were procured, and still are. At daybreak, therefore, the bailiff, who, like his father, was a serf of the manor, started on the road to London, some forty-five miles distant, over the Chiltern Hills, through Wycombe and Uxbridge to London, along one of the most beautiful highways in England. He arrives in London, with servants and horses, and takes up his lodging at one of the numerous inns in the city or in Southwark, and, according to the fashion of the time, goes out to purchase provisions for man and horse, for the inn did not necessarily provide travellers with more than lodging and sleeping accommodation. Early next day he sets about the business on which he had come, inspects the warehouses on the wharf below the southern wall of the city, and finds the five stones which will suit his own and the Oxford mill. Having chosen them, he adjourns with the merchant to some tavern near, in which to discuss the terms of his bargain. The chaffering was doubtlessly long and anxious. In so large an affair it was worth while to stint neither time nor money, and the bailiff debates the price over the exceptional and extensive order of five gallons of Bordeaux wine. The business, too, is worth the merchant's while, for the order is also a considerable affair to him, since it is plain that the bailiff wants the best articles in the warehouse. At last the bargain is struck, the price first asked abated, the luck penny—"God's silver"—is delivered. There are witnesses to the transaction, and the bailiff delivers his acknowledgment of debt. Next morning the bailiff returns to his farm and his duties, and communicates the terms of his purchase to his lords and employers. Shortly afterwards he makes a second journey to London, to pay for his millstones,—the five cost £15 16*s.* 8*d.*,—and to make a bargain for their carriage by water. Two days are spent in London on this business, and more potations, now cheaper, as he is dealing with sailors and wharfingers, are found necessary. At

last they are set on board, a considerable sum being paid for shipping them. Dues are claimed for wharfage and murage, tolls for maintaining the bank and the city wall, and the bailiff rides back to his home on the fourth morning of the second visit. The vessel with its freight passes up the river, through the swans and salmon fisheries and the forest of Windsor, as it is emphatically called, which was still a mere hunting seat, though soon to be crowned with the palace which the young king erected on Wykeham's designs. At Maidenhead the boat pays a second murage, perhaps because the jurisdiction of the city over the Thames extended as far as this. Then it passed along the horseshoe of the Thames till the boat rested at Henley, beyond which it is probable that the navigation of the river did not extend, at least in summer. Here the stones are bored for the use of the mills, and two are carried in hired carts to Cuxham. The Oxford servants looked after what was needed for their wants.

On his road to and from London, Oldman, the bailiff, passed Tyburn brook, which had been employed a century before to supply water for the growing necessities of London, a supply which sufficed till more than a century after the journey which I have described, when springs at Paddington were added, now, I believe, collected in the Serpentine. A few months before, Mortimer had been hanged at Tyburn, the place which was for many a century to be notorious in the annals of metropolitan crime. The downfall of the foolish, disreputable Edward had not been followed by the reforms which the nation expected, the dignity of the English Crown demanded, and the interests of the English exchequer required. Mortimer had been the queen's paramour, and had made peace with the Scots, even selling the young king's sister to the son of the detested Bruce. He had suffered the claims of the English monarch to be neglected in France. But this was over, since Mortimer's righteous execution.

It cannot, I think, be doubted, as we shall see when we come to deal with subsequent events, that political questions were discussed among the peasantry with great freedom and keenness. The mass of men had that interest in public affairs

which is bred by the possession of property and by the habits of self-government in the manor courts. In the days of Henry III., the Parliament was, as far as the record informs us, of prelates and nobles only, and it was to them that Henry appealed on the frequent occasions of his importunate mendicancy for aid. That the charge of this taxation, when a grant was made, was paid from the moneys of the nobles alone cannot be believed, unless, indeed, it were a scutage. But, at any rate, the commons are summoned in 1259, not only to assent to certain proceedings, but to undertake responsibilities; and when the full Parliamentary system is adopted in Edward's reign, we find that direct taxation of all householders is forthwith introduced. And as the possession of property and the habit of self-government predispose to political debate, so the incidence of direct taxation stimulates it, and I make no doubt that the domestic and foreign policy of the English sovereign, involving as it did a sensible contribution from the peasants' hoard, in order that his crops, his stock, and his household goods should be ransomed, was discussed with eagerness, and opinion, sometimes adverse, sometimes dangerous, was formed, which burst out occasionally with unexpected violence.

In 1341, the first year in which I have been able to find any trustworthy evidence on which to infer as to the comparative opulence of the English counties and principal towns, the city of London, exclusive of the county of Middlesex, was rated at less than one fourth of the whole county of Norfolk, inclusive of Norwich, which was probably, for its size, the second city in the kingdom in point of wealth, and about as much as the counties of Berks, Cambridge, Devon, or Northampton. The assessment is more than ten times that of the "city of the county of York," about seven-and-a-half times that of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and about eight times that of Bristol, these being the only municipalities which are severally assessed, and each being thus assessed for special reasons, for in each of them a considerable district in the neighbourhood was included in the city liberties, or put under the direction of the local authorities. The assessment of the county of Norfolk is far

in excess, estimated ratably by the acreage, of that of any other county; the next to it, though at a considerable distance, being Oxfordshire and Middlesex, exclusive of London. The cause is the inclusion of the opulent city of Norwich within the assessment.

In 1453, another assessment of an equally unsuspicious character exists. In this, the next city to London is York; the rate of London being about seven-and-a-half times more than that of York. London is about nine-and-a-half times as opulent as Norwich, the second city; twelve times more wealthy than Bristol, the third; fifteen times more than Coventry, the fourth; twenty-one-and-a-half times more than Newcastle; nearly twenty-three times more than Kingston-on-Hull; twenty-four-and-a-half times more than Lincoln; nearly twenty-eight times more than Southampton; and thirty-eight times more opulent than Nottingham, the lowest on the list. Some of these facts are to be accounted for, notably York and Coventry, by political and temporary causes. York was one of the headquarters of the Yorkist faction; and Coventry, the special stronghold of the Lancastrians, had been latterly enriched and extended by Margaret.

Fifty years later another and a similarly unsuspicious assessment can be found. In this seventeen cities and towns are separately valued. On this occasion, Bristol, which had been greatly enriched by the trade with Ireland and the North Sea, was the second city in the kingdom. London is assessed at only three-and-three-quarter times over Bristol; but there had been a great conflagration in London in the same year. Next comes York, with nearly one-fourth the amount. London is about five-and-a-half times richer than Lincoln. The next is Gloucester, with less than a sixth of the London quota. But London is seven-and-a-half times richer than Norwich, the manufacturers of which were now migrating southwards and westwards. Shrewsbury has nearly the same assessment as Norwich. The assessment of Oxford is a little more than a ninth that of London. That of Salisbury and Coventry about a ninth; of Hull less than a tenth; of Canterbury a little more than a tenth; of South-

ampton a little more than a twelfth; of Nottingham about a seventeenth; of Worcester and Southwark about a thirty-fourth; and of Bath, the lowest, about a forty-seventh that of London.

In 1377, the Parliament granted the king a poll-tax of fourpence a head on all lay persons over fourteen years of age, none but known beggars being exempted. Beneficed clergymen paid a shilling; and other ecclesiastics, except mendicant friars, paid fourpence. The number who paid the tax in each of the principal towns is preserved. If the number of those under sixteen is taken as one-third of the population, the estimate made a century ago, and one-third is therefore added to the amount, the population of London was 35,000; and next to it York, with near 11,000. Bristol had about 9,500, Coventry a little over 7,000, Norwich near 6,000, Lincoln about 5,000. No other English town had over 5,000 inhabitants.

In this record, the counties of Bedford, Surrey, Dorset, Middlesex, exclusive of London, Westmoreland, Rutland, Cornwall, Berkshire, Herts, Hunts, Bucks, and Lancashire, do not appear to have contained any town which was thought worthy of particular enumeration. It is to be expected that the relative opulence of London was greater per head of population than that of any other city, and the facts of the poll-tax square with such an estimate. The same rule will apply to towns like Norwich, which were conspicuous for their manufactures, and others, like Bristol, which had already become eminent for their commerce.

There is no topic in political arithmetic on which persons who are inexperienced in the art of interpreting figures are more likely to be deceived than they are in the population of any given country, or any given city, when a direct enumeration of the inhabitants is not at hand. Guesses have been made as to the populousness of English towns, and indeed of England itself, during the middle ages, which would be ludicrous, if they were not misleading and mischievous, because they suggest economical results which a more minute inquiry into the facts of the case will show to be impossible.

Now to estimate the real progress which this country has made, it is expedient that we should attempt to arrive at precise information as to what was the product of English agriculture; for we may be pretty sure that no importation of food worth speaking of was regularly made into England till very recent times; that what was produced in the country was the measure of its possible population; and that if an estimate is formed from vague surmises and still vaguer numbers, the inferences which are based on such estimates are sure to be delusive.

The estimate given above, which adds one-third to the number of persons liable to the tax in consideration of those who were under fourteen years of age, and raised to sixteen years in order to cover the probability that in the collection of the tax there were many evasions, may be taken exception to as too low an estimate of the untaxed population. It is true, that at present the number of persons under fifteen years of age, as compared with all above that age, is as nearly as possible in the proportion of 9 to 11, instead of 6·33 to 13·66. But it must be remembered that in the middle ages the risks of life from disease were far greater than they are at present, that medical skill was almost non-existent; that the conditions of life were eminently unwholesome; that the diet of the people, during fully one-half of the year, though abundant, was insalubrious; and that when human life is shortened by unfavourable circumstances, the mortality is far greater in the young than it is in those who, having escaped the perils of childhood, are, so to speak, selected and hardened. Besides, there was a large part of the population which was, by ecclesiastical rule, obliged to celibacy and chastity; and however much we may give ear to the gossip about monks and nuns, and the secret marriages or open concubinage of the secular clergy, public opinion and discipline must have exercised a very considerable check on the contribution of the clergy to the population of the middle ages. I am therefore disposed to conclude that the calculation made by Mr. Topham, in the seventh volume of the *Archæologia*, from whom I have borrowed the facts and the

estimate of the English towns in the fourteenth century, is as correct as can well be imagined, and that it would not be probable if any other basis of addition than that of one-third were made in determining the population of the towns.

When I published my first two volumes of the history of agriculture and prices, I was led to investigate the grounds on which estimates were made of the population of England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and to give the grounds on which I arrived at my own. My reasoning was nearly as follows :—"There were generally as many people existing in this country as there have been, on an average, quarters of wheat to feed them with. The evidence supplied from the produce of arable land of average quantity gives about a quarter an acre. At present it is about from three to four quarters an acre ; and this food is supplemented by other products which were unknown in the thirteenth century or for many centuries afterwards." I concluded, that setting the amount of land which has been devoted to towns, roads, and pleasure-grounds, in modern times, against that which was not broken up or cultivated six centuries ago, the possible wheat-growing land of the thirteenth century was about three million acres, and that from this must be deducted—though I admit that by far the greatest breadth sown was wheat—about a sixth of the average wheat-land—much more of which could be given under modern rotation to other crops—which would lie in fallow. I therefore concluded that about two-and-a-half millions of population was the maximum that could be reckoned with any probability for England, and that it was possibly even less. The view which I took was challenged with some acerbity, chiefly on the strength of certain numerical accounts given at the time or soon afterwards as to the loss of life in the great plague of the fourteenth century. After a brief controversy, I dropped the subject, for I know no time which is lost more thoroughly than that devoted to arguing on matters of fact with a disputant who has no facts, but only very strong convictions.

I had a singular confirmation of my inferences on the

subject in the actual enumeration of certain Kentish hundreds, nine in number, the facts of which I discovered in the Record Office. The document is undated, but is clearly of the time of Henry VIII., among the state papers of whose reign it was found. The hundreds are on the south-east side of Kent, and the enumeration, besides the population, contains an account, taken after the middle of the agricultural year, *i.e.*, about the beginning of April, of the stock of corn in the various hundreds. It may be observed here that there is no rye grown, the principal crops being wheat, barley, and oats. Kent at this time was one of the most thriving and populous parts of England, and these hundreds are in the richest agricultural district of the county. They contained no large town at that time, and contain none now. They are fair specimens of what was the wealthiest part of agricultural England in the later middle ages. Now the population of these hundreds in the first half of the sixteenth century (14,813) is almost exactly one-sixth of that at which it stood in 1861 (88,080). It will be seen that the population almost precisely corresponds to that which I stated, from an estimate of the rate of production, was the maximum population of England, and that this population was almost stationary for three centuries and a half. There is further evidence that the rate of production had not increased, and that, in fact, no improvement whatever had been made in the art of agriculture.

These inferences are signally confirmed by the estimate which is made from the record of the poll tax in 1377. The forty-two towns, with the addition of one-third to the actual numbers paying the tax, contained a population of 168,720 persons. The rest of the population is 1,207,722, together making 1,376,442. Durham and Chester are reckoned at 51,083, a very large, perhaps excessive estimate, Wales with Monmouth, at 131,040. The two Counties Palatine were separately assessed, and the return is not included, and Wales with Monmouth is not assessed at all. This gives a total of 1,558,565. By adding a third for the children, and making a very liberal allowance for ecclesiastics and mendicants, no less

than 162,153, Mr. Topham concludes that the whole population of England and Wales, in the last year of Edward the Third's reign, was two and a half millions. I cannot but think that three calculations, two of them being from matters of fact, could not be so exactly similar in their results and be merely fortuitous coincidences.

The distribution of occupations in a town of some magnitude, Colchester, estimated in 1377 to contain a population of 4,432, as it had a taxable number of 2,955, and is reckoned as tenth in the list, is curiously illustrated by the rolls of Parliament of the years 1296 and 1305. The first is, I imagine, imperfect, only 251 persons being specified in it, while 391 are found in the second. If we take five persons to a family, and consider the last enumeration to be exhaustive, there must have been about 2,000 persons residing in Colchester and its vills in 1301, and the population must have doubled within three-quarters of a century. It is very possible that certain of the eastern towns made considerable progress, as during Edward's wars an active agricultural trade, and no little purely commercial intercourse, took place between the eastern counties on the one hand, and the Hanse and Flemish towns on the other.

In the second list, there are 229 persons, whose calling is not specially designated. Besides these, there are twelve clergymen, ten persons of considerable substance, sixteen shoemakers, thirteen tanners, ten smiths, eight weavers, eight butchers, seven bakers, six fullers, six girdlers, five mariners, four millers, four tailors, three dyers, three fishermen, three carpenters, and three spicers or grocers. The following trades are also enumerated :—cooper, white leather seller, potter, parchment maker, furrier, cook, tiler, bowyer, barber, mustarder, woolcomber, lorimer, wood-turner, linen draper, wheelwright, glover, fuel dealer, old clothes dealer, sea-coal dealer, glazier, brewer, ironmonger, and vintner. Two of the girdlers were also mercers, and one sold verdigris and quicksilver (for sheep dressing). It will be noticed that the number of tanners is large, as also of shoemakers. The fact points to a local manufacture and handicraft. Essex contained a large amount of

forest, and especially oak forest, and the town was therefore well placed for a leather industry.

The activity of the townsfolk was not confined to their special craft or trade. In harvest time they poured out of the towns into the country. When the king dismisses his parliament in the middle ages, he sends the nobles to their sports, the commons to their harvest, and makes no distinction in his directions between knights of the shire and burgesses. So, we are told, the long vacation in the courts and the universities was extended from July to October, in order that such persons as followed the pursuits of law and letters might have ample leisure for the all-important work of the harvest. It is true that the aggregate of the town population was not of much account in the mass of the rural folk, and for the purposes of the harvest. But beyond doubt the land in the immediate neighbourhood of towns was better dressed and more heavily manured than that at a distance from any considerable centre of population, and the spare hands from the town were welcome to the larger proprietors.

The chief port of England was London, as it was the centre, and, in a great degree, the controller of the government. It would seem, however, from the accounts which have been preserved as to the accommodation which the ports were able to supply to the Government on emergencies, that London did not possess the greatest number of vessels. In the enumeration of the contingents which each English port provided in 1346 towards the siege of Calais, the largest contribution to the south fleet was Fowey, with forty-seven vessels, each manned with a little over sixteen men; and Yarmouth for the north, with forty-three ships, each with more than twenty-five men on an average. London sends twenty-five vessels, each with twenty-six men.

The principal English ports, some few on the east coast, with Bristol on the west excepted, are in the south, for the southern contingent is more than double that of the northern, the former being the district south of the Thames and Severn. The principal southern ports are Dartmouth, Plymouth, Bristol, Sandwich, Winchelsea, Southampton,

Weymouth, Looe, Shoreham, Dover, and Margate. Those of the north are Newcastle, Boston, Hull, Lynn, and Harwich, in addition to those in each district which have been referred to above as supplying the largest number of vessels. The total number of sailors in the employment of private individuals is 13,732, or at least that number with the ships (700) were impressed, together with the vessels in which they were employed and rated. Most of the southern ports were engaged in the French and Flemish trade. They may have ventured to the coast of Spain, though as late as the middle of the sixteenth century it does not appear that the English mercantile mariner passed the straits of Gibraltar. It was, however, especially with the coasting trade that the English mariners were concerned ; and if we may trust the calumnies of their French enemies, they did not scruple to maintain their supremacy in the narrow seas by acts of piracy, and by a total abstention from the duty of checking Mohammedan corsairs, who had, even in early times, gained a detested notoriety. It is said that towards the close of the fourteenth century a Genoese merchant offered the government of Richard II., that if he were allowed to store his property in the castle at Southampton he could make it the principal port of the Oriental produce which the Genoese used to despatch to the Flemish, Norman, and Breton marts, and that the London merchants put an end to the plan by murdering the projector. The story may be, probably is, merely monkish gossip, but it shows what were reputed to be the capacities of Southampton, and the convenience which belonged to its port.

Bristol was the principal port for Ireland and the western fisheries, especially for the salmon of the Severn, then and for a long time after the source of the best of this fish. We learn also that it was a great mart for hides, derived probably from Wales and Ireland. But the number and importance of these southern ports must be explained by the favourable position in which they stood for the trade with France and eastern Europe, and by the fact that, owing to the lightness of their draught, the small craft which swarmed upon the

coast found abundant shelter in the numerous creeks and rivers of southern England.

Still, the northern, and especially the eastern, marine of England had a considerable mercantile trade for the time. Newcastle from early times was the centre of the coasting supply of coal. The central coal-fields of England, except those in the valley of the Trent, were unknown. But early in the thirteenth century, sea-coal, probably as ballast, was carried as far south and west as Southampton. The vessels in which they were conveyed were under forty tons burden, and the trade, on which a ratable toll was paid to the king, became so general and so important in the fifteenth century that frauds were practised on the revenue by returning the tonnage at less than its actual amount.

Many of the eastern ports, from Hull to Colchester, were connected with the Flemish, Norwegian, and Baltic trade. Lynn, as the list of towns quoted above informs us, was a considerable resort for merchants, especially during the time of Stourbridge fair. Norwich is designated for its haven, and barley and malt were largely exported from it. So was also wool, notably from Hull. The small craft ran across the German Ocean during the fine weather of the summer months, and traded extensively with the Continent.

But the most important industry of the eastern ports was the fishing trade. Yarmouth was, as now, the chief centre of the herring fishery; Grimsby of cod, such at least as was caught in the neighbourhood; and Berwick of salmon. The greatest enterprize was, however, shown by Scarborough. This little town coasted along Scotland to Aberdeen, from which they brought fish, the name of which, Haberdens, implies the origin of the take, though it has long been a puzzle. They went on to the Orkney and Shetland Islands, and even to Iceland, where they gained great store. At last, in the fifteenth century, the Bristol fisherman, fired by trade emulation, and now acquainted with the mariner's compass, reached the same goal through the stormy Hebrides, and competed successfully with their eastern rivals.

English towns were generally commanded by castles. The

most important of these were in the king's hands, and were garrisoned by his captains and troops. Such were the castles, for example, of Oxford, Wallingford, and Windsor, which commanded the most important points in the Thames valley. Of these the two first were supposed to have the highest strategic value. It is noteworthy, that when the articles of impeachment were drawn up against Suffolk in 1450, the fact that, while he held Wallingford castle nominally for the king, he had garrisoned and victualled it really for himself, was emphatically insisted on as proof of his treasonable intentions and designs against the reigning family. But these castles, though frequently held by nobles as part of their private estate, were in reality licensed by the king; and it appears that, when the authority of the administration was unimpaired, it was held that the power which gave license to fortify a dwelling-house was competent to rescind the permission.

I do not find, in searching through the records of mediæval business, that complaint is made of rapine or wrong-doing, either by the king's deputies or by the nobles who had those fortified habitations. The castle does not appear to have often been, even after the use of gunpowder became familiar, furnished with artillery, though it was and remained in the immediate possession of the Crown. The establishment of a private fort would, I conceive, be looked on with the gravest suspicion, and be conceived to be evidence of sinister designs. It is remarkable, too, after the general demolition of castles on the accession of Henry II., that mediæval warfare in England was rarely characterized by sieges, though in the war between king and parliament the fortified house, doubtlessly under royal license or command, is constantly assailed, defended, and captured, or successfully held. These castles were useful in maintaining the peace, as quarters for such soldiers as the king habitually kept under arms, and as residences for the sovereign and his court. Thus, on the Scotch and Welsh borders, they were important instruments for checking marauders; and, as is well known, the line of fortified castles from Flint to Carnarvon was part of the

machinery by which Edward held the Principality in a firm grasp. But it does not appear that the castle was conceived to be a means for controlling the king's subjects.

The towns themselves were walled, and the castle was almost always outside the circle of the city wall and moat, though connected with it by an outwork. It was the duty, too, of the citizens or townsfolk to keep their own walls in repair. The king could also make a requisition, it appears, on the vicinage of his castles, or on the inferior tenants, for money or labour towards the repair of such castles, when they were conceived to be part of the public defences. Sometimes charters were given, expressly relieving the tenants from this liability. But the fortifications of the town were in the hands of the burghers, and we may be sure that the Crown would encourage them in forming, as far as they could, an equipoise to a powerful or turbulent noble. I am persuaded, that had the possession of these fortified places been abused, the dismantling of them, which became the necessary policy of the Parliamentary army, would have been anticipated centuries before.

Though the king was entitled to demand the assistance of his subjects, or at least of his tenants, towards the repair of his castles, I do not find that the demand is made, or the expense of satisfying it recorded. There is, however, a good deal of evidence still existing, through the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, of the charges to which the king's personal revenue was put in maintaining these public defences. It is probable that not a few towns in England rose under the walls, and on account of the protection of the castle.

Many English towns, long since decayed, owed their origin to the development of some local industry. It is well known that many settlements, which afterwards grew into towns, were gifted subsequently with parliamentary representation, though not with municipal institutions, in consequence of a special manufacture carried on in them. Such were several of the Sussex towns, where, as late as the reign of Anne, iron of high quality was manufactured. So, again, not a few of

the western towns became the seats of the cloth manufacture, though it has become extinct in them now.

On the other hand, the most populous and busy districts of our day were the fens and moors, scantily peopled by a rude race. Lancashire was one of the poorest English counties, as was also the West Riding of York. As late as the end of the seventeenth century, these two counties were nearly at the bottom of the list in opulence. Population was scanty in them, and wages low. The Mersey was still a silent estuary; the Irwell a mountain stream. There were forges and cutlery works in Hallamshire, and Bradford was a cloth mart in early times. But the greater part of the district, now so densely inhabited, which lies within the circuit of twenty miles from Leeds, was occupied by wild animals and lawless men, the latter hardly kept in order by swift justice. The maiden of Halifax is the type of a jurisdiction which had long been obsolete in the more settled parts of England.

CHAPTER V.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND TRADE.

Source of the "Distribution" of Wealth—Comparative Wealth of English Counties—Norfolk and Oxfordshire the most Opulent—Poverty of the North and West—Present Condition of Agricultural Counties—Markets—English Roads in the Thirteenth Century—Carriage of Goods—The Common Carrier—The Scattered Character of Estates—English Inns—The Control of Markets—The Assize of Weights—The Assize of Bread—The Regulation of Labour Prices—Usury Laws, their Origin—Bankruptcy—Forestalling and Regrating—The Absence of Middle Men—Low Cost of Building—Bargains Universal—Fairs and their Origin—The Discipline of Fairs—Their Object and Place in the Middle Ages—Their Usefulness even to Recent Times—Stourbridge Fair—Its Magnitude and Importance—Routes by which Foreign Produce reached Europe—The Hanse Towns—The Spice Trade with India—Routes in the Thirteenth Century—The Discoveries of the Cape Passage and the New World—The Conquest of Egypt in the Sixteenth Century.

ECONOMISTS understand by the distribution of wealth that share which each of the factors in production is able to secure for himself out of the gross total of objects possessing value in exchange. I purpose to postpone this interesting subject to later chapters, as I have discussed the distribution of social privileges, in so far as it was relative to the occupancy of land, in an earlier chapter, and in the present to deal with the comparative opulence of different districts in England, with the locality of other than agricultural industry, with the relations of England to domestic and foreign trade, with the fair at home and the centres of commerce abroad, and with the machinery by which Eastern produce was carried to England and acquired by the consumer.

I have already adverted to the relative position in which the principal cities and towns of England stood at different times in the various documents which supply us with evidence

on the subject. This comparison is instructive, because it indicates at once the amount of the population which could be spared, in the thirteenth and succeeding centuries, from the primary aim of all human industry,—the acquisition of food, and suggests, by a contrast between population and taxation, what were the opportunities of accumulation which particular towns possessed. In the fourteenth century, the urban stood to the rural population in the proportion of 1 to 12·34; and many of the towns enumerated are mere villages according to present ideas.

The comparative wealth of the different English counties is to be learnt from such assessments of taxation as have been referred to in the previous chapter. The boundaries of the counties have not been materially changed for centuries. There was no motive to alter these boundaries; indeed, there was every motive to keep them strictly, for the administration of the district, and its liabilities to taxation, of whatever kind it were, would have been rendered uncertain had not the boundaries been defined. It is true that some counties, particularly northern Norfolk, eastern Kent, and the coast of Sussex, have lost by denudation, or perhaps by gradual subsidence. But it is not likely that this incident has materially altered them, and perhaps the loss has been compensated by accretion. I have therefore, in estimating the relative opulence of the several counties, taken the existing acreage, and have calculated a past burden, and the past means of bearing it on the present area.

Including London, Middlesex is, of course, the most opulent of the English counties, though, even if London is excluded from it, the wealth of Middlesex is considerable. It would naturally, as being in proximity to the principal market of England, from which it could get its wants supplied at the cheapest rates, and in which it could sell its produce at the best price, possess advantages from which remoter districts would be excluded. Nor does it follow that because a comparative decline in the relative opulence of London and Middlesex seems to take place, that the city and the home county had become poorer. If a fixed sum is to be raised by

way of taxation, a town or district may seem worse off, when in reality its contingent is lessened by other towns and districts being better off. In the earliest valuation for taxation which I have been able to obtain and analyse, the opulence of Middlesex, without London, was equal to that of the second county. In later assessments it falls, under the same circumstances, to the eighth or tenth place.

In the earliest assessment, Norfolk, excluding Middlesex with London, was the most opulent county in England. The explanation of the fact is that, in the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth centuries, it was for the time densely peopled, being the principal seat of the woollen manufacture, a considerable place for linen manufacture, and in close relations with the Low Countries. It grew large quantities of barley, which was exported, either raw or malted, to Flanders. The cloth manufacture was carried on in many villages and small towns; the linen was principally woven at Aylsham. Even when the woollen manufacture spread to the west and north, Norfolk was still largely employed in this industry, and though it declined relatively, and, indeed, absolutely, after the second half of the fourteenth century, it remained till the sixteenth the second county for opulence in England. It is noteworthy that it was the head-quarters of Lollardy in the century preceding the Reformation, and the most deeply imbued with the tenets of the Gospellers at and after the Reformation. The victims of those new opinions seem to have been more numerous in Norfolk than in the whole of the rest of England during the persecutions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

My reader may be perhaps surprised to hear that, in the earliest assessment, Oxfordshire was only a little behind Norfolk, and soon surpassed it, though it does not appear to have had any local manufactures, and must have owed its wealth entirely to its agriculture. But an inspection of the county will explain the fact. It had only one or two inconsiderable forests, one not very extensive fen, and very little waste land. The county is generally flat, and watered by two important rivers and their affluents. The amount of natural pasture in this county is probably larger than in

any other. The soil, except in the south-east, is exceptionally fertile, and adapted to heavy crops of wheat and beans. The character of the county, even in remote times, is indicated by the extreme paucity of roads. When land was of little value, even though the district was near the metropolis, as in Surrey, roads are very abundant, the gravel or stone lying near the surface, and a track being made without offence or hindrance. The next counties are Bedfordshire, Rutlandshire, and Berkshire. In early times, Kent takes a higher place than it does later on. The soil of the first of these counties is not unlike that of Oxfordshire, though there is more chalk and gravel in Berks. Hunts, Cambridgeshire, Wilts, Northants, Lincolnshire, and Gloucestershire form the next group. Then come Herts, Suffolk, Somerset, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, and Bucks; Somerset, if we include Bristol, and the East Riding of Yorkshire, if York be included in it. A fifth division contains Dorset, Notts, and Hampshire. A sixth includes Surrey, Sussex, and Essex, to which may be added Worcester. The ratable value of the remaining counties and divisions of counties rapidly declines. The least unprosperous of them are Hefeford, Stafford, Shropshire, Derby, Devon, and Cornwall, but the opulence of the best off of these is not much more, acre for acre, than a fourth of the Oxfordshire rating, and of the poorest, little more than a sixth. The North and West Ridings of Yorkshire and Westmoreland come next. Far behind these come Lancashire, Northumberland, and Cumberland, though in the earliest assessment Northumberland stood thirty-first in the assessment, while, later on, it is uniformly thirty-eight. At the same time Lancashire is the poorest English county. But in the assessments of 1375, 1453, and 1503, Cumberland is at the bottom. Cheshire and Durham were never valued, being taxed by a different machinery, and being unrepresented in Parliament. The extreme south-west, the northern counties, and the Welsh marches, were the poorest districts of mediæval England, while the east and those which lie within the Thames valley system were the most wealthy. Wilts, Northants, Gloucester, and Lincolnshire owe their position to other causes. The first two in all the

assessments are nearly stationary. The last two occupy a much higher position in the sixteenth than they do in the fourteenth century.

The comparative poverty of the northern counties and the Welsh marches is, I make no doubt, to be ascribed to the unsettled condition of a district which was engaged in a constant struggle against the incursion of plunderers over the border. The princes of Wales had been extirpated, and the Principality could put no force in the field which could cope with an English army. But the spirit of independence was not dead, and the Welsh were troublesome neighbours. The prolonged revolt of Owen Glendower in the fifteenth century was, no doubt, preceded by frequent incursions of the Welshmen from the hills. And on the Scotch border there was incessant warfare, hardly lessened by the engagements which the Scottish kings made on behalf of their subjects.

If we take the twenty English counties which are principally engaged with agriculture at the present time, we shall find, excluding Westmoreland, the poorest; Cornwall, the assessment of which is double that of Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Dorset, that there is no material difference in the ratable value of the property, ranging as it does between £1 15*s.* an acre, the valuation of Wilts and Rutland, and £2 8*s.*, the valuation of Herts, which, by the way, is not unaffected by proximity to London. After Hertfordshire, the next highest is Cambridge, at £2 7*s.*; Berks, at £2 5*s.* 6*d.*; and Oxford, at £2 4*s.* The progress of agriculture has done much towards eliminating such hindrances to the adequate cultivation of the soil as were present to the imperfect husbandry of a bygone age, and of rendering agriculture possible where pasture seemed to be often the only use which could be made of land. A range, however, of only 13*s.* an acre, to be accounted for in part by other than purely agricultural operations, indicates the direction which agricultural improvement has taken. Nor do I see any reason to doubt that, according to their lights, our ancestors, six centuries ago, did not willingly neglect to cultivate that which their experience showed to be likely to return a fair compensation for their labour.

The cultivation of England in the middle ages demanded the establishment of markets at which the villager could purchase what he needed for his calling, obtain the few necessaries which his domestic industry could not supply, and sell his own produce. In order that he might do all this the more conveniently, it was necessary that he should be able to find sufficiently serviceable roads.

It is a general impression, gathered, I suspect, from the scandalous condition of the English highways at about the middle of the eighteenth century, just before the General Turnpike Act (1773) was passed, that at an earlier age the means of communication between places was difficult at all times of the year, and all but impossible at certain periods. This opinion, I am persuaded, is a mistake. The proof that communications were good in the time of which I am writing is partly to be explained by the rapidity with which journeys were effected, partly by evidence as to the cost of carrying goods over known or ascertainable distances.

Many of the English roads were a survival of the Roman empire, in which the construction of highways was a military and political necessity. Great lines of road traversed Roman Britain from its principal colonies, London and York, to the other settlements. Roman villas are constantly discovered in secluded spots, but near those great roads, which ran in rigid lines. Now we are told that, among other ancient obligations, the maintenance of existing roads was one of the earliest and most lasting. They were from remote times under the authority and protection of the king,—were his highways. As new towns sprung up, like Oxford, Coventry, Reading, Abingdon, under the shadow of great monasteries, though probably the last two were always Saxon villages, roads were constructed from such towns to the main or ancient roads. Generally, however, the houses of the villages were grouped on either side of the old road, where such a road was in existence, or on the new road, when it was necessary to connect the settlement with the old system of communication. The roads of England are roughly exhibited in a fourteenth century map still preserved in the Bodleian

Library, and are identical with many of the highways which we know familiarly. In time these highways fell out of repair, and were put, as I have said, in the last century under the Turnpike Acts, when they were repaired. But comparatively little of the mileage of English roads is modern. What has been constructed has generally been some shorter and easier routes, for in the days of the stage coaches it was highly expedient to equalise the stages.

I set no particular store by the evidence which may be found in plenty as to the rapidity with which journeys on horseback were effected during summer. The head of an Oxford or Cambridge College was able to travel to London in a single day in summer, and would take two days in winter. The journey from Oxford to Newcastle-on-Tyne, near which one of these colleges had two valuable estates, occupied six days, one other being a day of rest, five being occupied in reaching Thirsk. In the thirteenth century, the Earl of Gloucester takes three days in journeying from London to Leicester, and three from Melton Mowbray to London, fifteen days from Lincoln to Carnarvon, and seven from Shrewsbury to the Isle of Axholm. And to extend this record, the traveller bound to the court of Avignon in the winter, started on Monday, Jan. 23rd, and reached Dover by Saturday, got to Paris on the following Saturday, and to Avignon by the end of a fortnight. The return journey occupied eighteen days from Avignon to Calais, and a week more from Calais to Oxford. In the journey of the Earl of Gloucester there were no doubt some wheeled carriages in attendance.

The cost of carrying heavy goods by land is about a penny per ton per mile, whenever the journey backwards and forwards could be accomplished within a single day. If the carrier were employed over night, of course the charge was somewhat greater, as the traveller had to be lodged, though this was always at a cheap rate, for, as I have already stated, he purchased or carried with him his own provisions. The lowness of the charge, which continued till the great rise in prices in the sixteenth century, is, I have no doubt, to be accounted for by the fact that the freeholders and tenants in

villages were numerous; that horse and cart, or oxen and cart, were part of the equipment of any holding beyond mere cottage farming, and that, therefore, plenty of the service was readily available. Even after the great rise in prices, land and water carriage, especially the former, were disproportionately cheap. We find this fact in the carriage of stone, bricks, and other building materials, in that of wood and charcoal and analogous kinds of fuel, and in the low price which is constantly paid for the conveyance of farm produce to market.

The ultimate test is the rate paid for carriage by the common carrier. Here, however, it should be remembered that the carrier was by common law a bailee of the goods, and liable to the consignor for their safe delivery. Hence his charges involved a variable sum for insurance. When he conveys money his rate is high, as it also is, though in a less degree, when he conveys, as he sometimes does, personal baggage. Now an excellent test of the cost of carriage over known distances is the charge for conveying wine, for the distance is considerable at any inland town, and the carrier may, in some cases must, have passed several days and nights on the road. The article is bulky, packed with labour and difficulty, and is peculiarly liable to being pilfered. I find that it was conveyed in winter time at about 3½d. per ton per mile for the double journey; and I think that no article could be found of more difficult and laborious conveyance than a tun of wine (252 gallons) in bulk during winter, over the ancient road from Southampton to Oxford, with the loading from the wharf, and unloading at the place of destination.

The very existence of a class of common carriers, who got their living by conveying the most valuable kinds of goods, and by regularly traversing the country from Southampton and Winchester to Oxford, from the midland counties to Stourbridge fair, near Cambridge, and even from Oxford to Newcastle-on-Tyne, is proof, not only that there was a demand for the carrier, but that the means of communication were fairly good, and the principal roads, even in winter time, were kept in decent repair. Nor were the motives for such a practice, the adequate maintenance of

highways, wanting. . Estates even of wealthy noblemen were rarely in a ring fence, but were greatly scattered. Persons living at a considerable distance had often for that time important interests in the matter of rent charges on the estates of others, rent charges frequently paid in kind. This was especially the case with the monasteries. A religious house was in the first place endowed with an estate immediately adjacent to the site on which the conventual buildings were erected. In course of time, piety or fear endowed the monastery with scattered and outlying portions of an estate, a few strips in this communal field, a close and house in that parish, a mill and curtilage in another. As time went on, it became a custom to enrich monastic and collegiate foundations, and lastly, academic colleges, with the great tithes of valuable livings, for the impropriation of which the consent of king, bishop, and pope was necessary, or at least so convenient that prudent persons would not neglect the precaution. In Fitzherbert's time, just before the dissolution of the monasteries, the Benedictine was everywhere looking after his rents, his produce, and his tithes, and the Cistercian after the woolpacks of the conventual sheep farms. The earliest foundation of Balliol College, in Oxford, was from the great tithes of a Yorkshire benefice. The fellows of Merton College took long journeys to Avignon and Northumberland in order to procure the appropriation of the great tithes in a large parish on the Scotch border. And if we add to these the annual circuits of the authorities, three a year, one of which, that in autumn, was carried out in great detail, we can understand, in an age when cultivation by owners was universal, and the collection of dues, rents, and produce a matter of great interest, how important it was to have adequate and regular means of communication.

In the more sparsely peopled and outlying districts it is probable that accommodation was afforded on long journeys by the monasteries, though I am sure that people, mistaking, as they constantly do, concurrent facts for causes, exaggerated the use of these conveniences after or at the Reformation, and ascribed to the Dissolution that rapid interruption of

accommodation and the means of transit from place to place which certainly ensued on that event. But England from the very earliest times was a country full of inns. In the year 1332, the Warden of Merton, Robert Trenge, and two of the fellows, make a journey to Northumberland, for the purpose of inducing the bishop to acquiesce in the impropriation of a benefice to which the papal consent had been given the year before. They leave Oxford on Monday, Jan. 5th, and are absent for ten weeks, till March 16th. During the greater part of this time—indeed, the whole of the time, except when they are resident on their own manor—they stay for the night at inns, where they pay a small sum for lodging, and buy provisions, beer, wine, fuel, light, for their own wants, with corn and hay for their horses. They feast the bishop's commissioner for a week, and the parishioners for a Sunday; and though the most costly articles of the feast are procured at Newcastle-on-Tyne, and even the better beer, the wine appears to have been purchased on the spot. I know no trade, indeed, which has clung longer to special localities than that of the innkeeper. Not a few of the Oxford inns can be traced back for centuries. The constant tradition was that an ancient inn frequented by Shakspeare stood in one street, from which it was removed only a few years ago to make room for the newer buildings of a neighbouring inn. Another, opposite St. Mary Magdalene Church, which I have been able to trace to the fifteenth century under the same sign, was removed only twenty years ago. One great Oxford inn, near the Four Ways, was in existence as the principal hostel for five centuries, under the name of the Fleur-de-Lys, and the names of many others bear evidence of a remote antiquity. Indeed, the signs of inns are constant proof of the period in collateral history when the site was dedicated to a hostel. The Tumble Down Dick and the Royal Oak are specimens of the manner in which partisans, contemptuous or loyal, ridiculed Richard Cromwell and welcomed back the Stuarts, as the Boulogne Gate and the Boulogne Mouth refer to the expedition of Henry in 1544, the Blue Boar to the short-lived reign of Richard III. The

sign was not, indeed, confined to the inn. It was the advertisement to all shops; not, I believe, for the reason which has been absurdly guessed, that the arts of reading and writing were comparatively unknown, but because the eye could be caught and informed as to the kind of goods which were to be found in the low dark shop. There is certainly no country where elementary teaching is more general than in the eastern cities of the American Union, there is none in which the goods in shop or store are more openly displayed, and there is certainly none in which the use of signs designed to attract the eye is more general.

The establishment and control of the town market was the most universal and the most valued of municipal privileges. The market in London was perpetual, and the market spaces were the property of the Corporation. In Norwich, which was said to have received its first charter from Stephen in 1147, there were many markets in the square where the Guildhall is built, and, indeed, elsewhere, the tolls of which were regularly collected under separate schedules, and formed part of the corporate income of the city. The same was the case in Oxford, where there was a conflict of jurisdiction between the University and the city, which ultimately ended in a compromise, under which the discipline of the provision market was conferred on academical officials, and the tolls were divided between the two corporations. The two days of the Oxford market, Wednesday and Saturday, can be traced back to the thirteenth century.

The control of the market was undertaken for a treble purpose,—to prevent frauds, to regulate the cost of manufacturing products, and to ensure what was believed to be a natural price. The assize of weights and measures, that of bread and beer, and the enactments directed against forestalling and regrating, are examples of the mode in which our forefathers exercised the police of the market. The first, which has, without objection, remained to our own day, is a statute so early that its date is lost. The repression of false weights and measures was part of the police of every manor, village, or town. The ale-seller and miller, the two perma-

nent traders or craftsmen of the village, were constantly under the control of the court leet, and were frequently presented for frauds. An attempt was made to guarantee the quality of the drink served, as well as to regulate its just quantity, by giving authority to two officers of the manor, called ale-tasters, to certify to the character of the ale which was to be sold. Their function was to prevent adulteration. So there was a corporation in Norwich whose business it was to see that woollen goods were up to quality, measure, and weight, and to amerce offenders. It was generally part of the business of a London company, in consideration of the privileges bestowed on it, to see that the public was not defrauded by dishonest craftsmen and traders. A survival or two of this universal duty is to be found in the Hall marking of the Goldsmiths' Company, and the control which the Fishmongers are supposed to exercise over the supplies of Billingsgate.

We leave manufacturers to charge what they please for the process of transforming raw material into consumable articles, with the conviction that competition will be a greater check to excessive rates than market regulations could be. But in the middle ages such a notion would have been repudiated, and justly so. Even now it is doubtful whether competition is of universal efficacy, and whether it is not more correct to say that where combination is possible, competition is inoperative. Hence we subject some callings to regulated prices, and it may be doubted whether the progress of opinion will not hereafter enlarge the area of regulated prices. Still the inclination of people is as yet to let prices find their level by competition in every case where distinct proof is not given that such a concession would be unsafe or unfair. In the middle ages, to regulate prices was thought to be the only safe course whenever what was sold was a necessary of life, or a necessary agent in industry. Hence our forefathers fixed the prices of provisions, and tried to fix the price of labour and money.

We have seen that the early history of municipal institutions was identified and associated with the principles of self-government and a regulated monopoly. The munici-

pality was permitted to frame bye-laws for its own conduct, such bye-laws to be not adverse to the general well-being, and the guilds were similarly allowed to limit, on definite and well understood conditions, entrance into and a share in the business which was to be done. A mediæval guild, in short, was not unlike the regulated company of the seventeenth century, into which admission was allowed on the payment of a fine, and the individual so admitted was left to carry on his calling as his means, his abilities, and his reputation gave him opportunities. Where that which he produced and sold was a matter of optional use, the custom of the middle ages gave him the discretion of bargaining and exacting such a price as the needs of the purchaser might fix, though it is probable that the guild would look suspiciously on under-selling, as it did on buying over the heads of other members. But no police of the middle ages would allow a producer of the necessaries of life to fix his charges by the needs of the individual, or, in economical language, to allow supplies to be absolutely interpreted by demand. The law did not fix the price of the raw material, wheat or barley. It allowed this to be determined by scarcity or plenty; interpreted, not by the individual's needs, but by the range of the whole market. But it fixed the value of the labour which must be expended on wheat and barley in order to make them into bread and ale. Not to do this would have been to the mind of the thirteenth century, and for many a century afterwards, to surrender the price of food to a combination of bakers and brewers, or to allow a rapacious dealer to starve the public. They thought that whenever the value, or part of the value, of a necessary commodity was wholly determinable by human agencies, it was possible to appraise these agencies, and that it was just and necessary to do so. That we have tacitly relinquished the practice of our forefathers is, I repeat, the result of the experience that competition is sufficient for the protection of the consumer. But I am disposed to believe that, if a contrary experience were to become sensible, we should discredit our present practice, and revive, it may be, the past, at least in some directions.

The history of usury laws is curiously illustrative of the manner in which society interprets contracts. I think I am right in saying that, without exception, in the infancy of social organization, contracts, even involving the severest consequences, were enforced with rigour. The Athenian and Roman law of debt, and the stringency with which principal and interest were exacted by the law, are well known. It is said that much of the slavery which prevailed in early English history was the punishment for unfulfilled contracts, the compensation for debts that could not be paid. The earliest mercantile law of England permitted the borrower to pledge his land, and to render his person liable for unpaid debts. It was felt, I do not assert that it was said, that when men discovered that trade and commerce made credit a necessity, stringent penalties were necessary in order to educate people into the habit of not making default in contracts. The acknowledgment that a debt is a binding obligation, and the cultivation of commercial integrity, are, I believe, two of the most difficult and important lessons which civilized society teaches, and are far more difficult to learn than the control of passion and deference to custom. In course of time it is found that the rigid interpretation of contracts for loans of money may lead to outrageous oppression, to the slavery of many defaulters, and to grave social perils. We know that in Athens and Rome the inconvenience led from discontent to revolution, and that usury laws were enacted. Now it is easy to say and prove that, in a later stage of society, usury pretends to assist the debtor, and in reality makes the loan more onerous, because it compels the lender to exact a further price for his risk, or to compensate him for breaking the law. Our forefathers saw that there were some loans to which, from their point of view, the usury laws should not apply; for loans on bottomry were always exempt from these enactments, and the equity of redemption was always implied in mortgages.

No doubt the remedy is to be found in the equitable interpretation of contracts. It is one thing to forbid a contract, except under certain conditions, another to see whether the situation under which one of the parties to a contract

has made it, has not been abused by the other party. The English law relieves the borrower on the expectancy of the reversion to a settled estate against usurious bargains; and it might very possibly extend its power of interpreting contracts equitably to other bargains. The legislature has recently decided to interpret contracts for the use of agricultural land on equitable principles, partly on the plea of the public food, partly on the ground that the occupier is in a position of disadvantage, and therefore is disabled from making a perfect contract. But the principal difficulty in the equitable interpretation of contracts is to find a competent arbitrator. The Irish landlords accuse the Land Commissioners, under the Act of 1881, of scandalous favouritism towards the tenants; and the advocates of the Irish tenants accuse the same persons of scandalous favouritism towards the landlords. Arbitrators on disputed questions are pretty certain to be criticised adversely by those whose interests are contrariant. It may be the case that the usury of the Jewish, or Greek, or Armenian money lenders in Eastern Europe, in Egypt, in India, in countries where the law gives unlimited protection to lenders, is producing discontent and violence, or is threatening social revolution. But if the persons could be found who could adjudicate between borrowers and lenders on equitable grounds, it might be expedient to make use of such agencies, even at the risk of being charged with the virtual revival of the usury laws.

In this country we have, though in a clumsy and indirect way, and of late years to the serious injury of commercial morality, given effect to what is a usury law, or perhaps an equitable interpretation of contracts, by our bankruptcy system. A law of bankruptcy, even in the more stringent form in which it has latterly been re-enacted, differs economically from a usury law, in the fact that the latter extinguishes a portion of the interest, the former a portion of the principal. Every person who buys on credit gives a price for the credit, whether he borrows money or goods, and it makes no difference to the economical position of credit as a factor in trade, and to the rate at which credit is accorded, if the law

intervenes to cut off a portion of the creditor's interest, or to call upon him to give his debtor a quittance on the payment of part of his principal. The evils which Bentham alleged to be the consequent of the usury laws are equally consequent on the bankruptcy law, which relieves a debtor of his liabilities. It is true that usury laws may put a heavier burden on perfectly solvent borrowers than they would have to bear in the absence of such laws; but the burden is exceptional and temporary, and does not differ from an exalted price due to temporary scarcity or exceptional demand; but a bankruptcy law must require, however severely it is administered, that all losses in trade must be paid either in the enhanced profits of dealers or in enhanced prices to consumers, the latter being in effect the same process as the former. But this is what the opponents of the usury laws have always alleged to be the inevitable effects of such legislation.

Our forefathers in their market regulations were always anxious to ensure what I may call natural cheapness. They did not, as I have said, except in some commodities,—money, labour, and certain labour processes,—attempt to fix the price of articles the plenty or scarcity of which depended on the abundance or the dearth of the seasons, for the assize of bread and ale contemplated the extremes of either cheapness or dearness. But they strove to prevent the artificial enhancement of price. Hence the offences of forestalling, that is, the purchase of corn on the road to the market, and of regrating, *i.e.*, the resale of corn in the same market at an increased price. The first offence was probably a double one; it lessened the dues of the market, as well as seeming to curtail supply. The second was thought to be an offence against the consumer. The criticism of these obsolete statutes and, as they have been called, imaginary offences is well known. To forbid traffic in articles of prime necessity is to encourage waste when plenty prevails, to induce famine when dearth is near. The corn dealer equalizes supply, and if by withholding his corn from market he makes it dearer, he also makes it cheaper than it would be by bringing it out when it otherwise would be scarce. Now this is certainly true. But though

our forefathers doubtlessly erred in making these practices an offence, they did not compel sales, and I find that producers were very acute during the middle ages, and for the matter of that, buyers, too, in doling out their supplies to the market, or in making purchases, according to their interpretation of the amount in hand or available for sale. The most critical sales of the year are those effected in early summer, when the amount of the last year's produce was known pretty correctly, and the prospects of the ensuing harvest could be fairly guessed.

The Englishman of the middle ages disliked intermediaries in trade, and strove to dispense with them as far as possible. He did his best to buy all his goods at first hand. He had his stock of iron for tools, and doled it out for fashioning to the local smith. He bought his stock of tar for sheep dressing in bulk. If he wished to have some article of luxury, as a silver cup, he purchased the metal, and paid the craftsman for his labour, weighing what he gave out and got back, as the merchant in Shakspeare's comedy is invited to do. A great corporation or a wealthy noble purchased their cloth and linen in large quantities, and hired tailor and seamstress to shape and sew them. If an opulent person resolved on building castle or church or convent, he rented a quarry for stone, and hired labourers and carts by the day to dig and carry it; he burnt lime with his own wood and in his own kiln, paying for the services of the lime-burners. He had trees cut down in his own forest or park, and shaped them by the hands he hired himself. He hired sawyers to prepare planks for floors, bought cranes to lift the materials and raw iron for the bars and frames of the windows. He got, in short, all the materials together, and frequently supplied the plans of the building and superintended the work of his labourers himself. As a consequence, the cost of building was inconceivably low — so low that, though wages and materials were at full relative prices, the ultimate cost of the building is far less than could be expected from any ordinary multiple which could be supplied with fair accuracy for the materials and labour. I have constantly inspected

the accounts of buildings, in which a multiple of twelve would give good modern prices for materials and labour; while one of thirty or forty would do no more than meet the cost in our present experience of the completed structure. It is the fashion with economists to speak of the functions of middlemen with admiration or complacency, as cheapening agents. I can only say that in many building operations, if I am to judge from mediæval prices, they have trebled the natural cost of the object produced, and, as far as I can see, with only one advantage, rapidity of construction—a result often more than compensated by scamped work, bad masonry, and other shameful frauds. The whole cost of building the bell tower at Merton College, Oxford, in the two years—May 1448 to May 1450—was under £142; this including the cost of three cranes, amounting to £6 6*s*. I do not believe that at present it could be built for less than £5,000, perhaps for not less than £6,000, though at a multiple of twelve the masons employed would have had 40*s*. a week for ten months of the year, and 34*s*. for December and January; the carpenters 24*s*. I shall comment on this hereafter.

The essence of mediæval trade was the bargain. It was no doubt as long and as anxiously discussed as it now is in an eastern town. The importance of it, when hands were struck on it, was indicated by the gift of the luck penny—God's silver, as it was called—the earnest or pledge of the contract. The custom survives, or did survive till recently, in the acceptance of the king's shilling by recruits. There might be witnesses to the transaction, and there was frequently a memorandum of the purchase exchanged by indenture between the parties when the business done was of importance. Such acknowledgments of purchase are sometimes discovered tacked on to annual rolls, and thus preserved from the destruction which would be the lot of mere temporary engagements.

As important, however, as markets in the economy of mediæval society were fairs. It is not easy to understand their origin. They were often held on land which lay outside the mark or manor or parish, as was the great fair on the north hundred of the city of Oxford,—the barbican of its

mediæval fortification, the only point at which the fortress was assailable by the acts of mediæval warfare. Hence in the middle ages the custody of the north hundred was entrusted to some trusted subject. It was on the side of the north hundred that Cromwell attempted his siege of Oxford after it had been the king's head-quarters. Sometimes they were part of the franchise of a great monastery. As late as Hearne's time, there was a fortnight's fair in Oxford called St. Frideswide's Fair, at which I find that, in the sixteenth century, the sale of books was carried on. Occasionally there were fairs for special objects, as at Leeds for cloth, at Weyhill for cheese. It is difficult for us, in the very general decline of these institutions, to understand how important they were in the middle ages. As I have said, London was a perpetual market, and yet there were fairs within the precinct of the city.

The franchise of a fair was one of great significance to the possessor thereof. It was always supposed to have originated with a grant from the Crown, or to be of prescriptive antiquity, and, consequently, to imply such a grant. If it were obvious or convenient to do so, the fair was associated with some church or religious house, and was opened at some convenient time at or after the day of dedication. Hence they were sometimes held in churchyards, till the practice was forbidden by a statute of Edward I.

A universal incident to a fair was what was called the court of pie-powder. The wayfarer, with "dusty foot," coming to the fair, and bargaining, might dispute with the vendor of goods, and words might go on to blows. There were consequently always judges, or at least a judge, to arbitrate on bargains, to keep the peace and to punish offenders. Of course it was an obligation on the authorities that just weights and measures should be used. There was a summary jurisdiction on ill-doers, perhaps the highest; for it is reasonable to conclude that a right, constantly conferred on lords of manors, to punish offenders, should be appurtenant to these great gatherings. The receipt of toll for what was sold—no toll could be taken on what was not sold, and the payment

of toll therefore rested with the buyer—was the profit of the franchise. But if the owner of the franchise attempted foolishly to take excessive toll, he was liable to action, even though he was destroying his own profits.

The object of the fair was twofold. It was to supply a market in which goods, which could not be found in the ordinary town market, would be procurable, and in which there would be a wider market for ordinary goods. The trader did not exist in the villages. In most villages he hardly existed at the beginning of the present century. In my native village the first shop was opened, for general trade, about sixty years ago, as I have heard, and, for many a year afterwards, the wants of the villagers were supplied by packmen and pedlars, or, in the case of the more opulent, by carts which came periodically from the nearest towns for orders. In the thirteenth century, all but the largest towns were less than modern villages. In 1377, the taxable population of Oxford was a little under 2,500 persons. It was probably not much more populous at the beginning of the fifteenth century. In 1411, Beaufort, Wykeham's successor, paid a sudden visit to New College, the foundation of Wykeham, and the college was called upon to entertain its visitor and lord, who was the king's brother and the Bishop of Winchester, and a possible benefactor, for the Oxford college always was on the look-out for him. Now pepper was an ingredient in every feast, and the college was out of the spice. The fellows had to buy half a pound of the Oxford grocer, and they paid a price for it which is entirely without parallel. Except in London, it was not possible to get foreign produce, other than wine, at a reasonable rate, and the purchaser of such produce obtained it more cheaply at the great fairs than he did in London itself.

Again, there were products sold in most towns which could be purchased in the greatest variety and at the lowest rates at the great fairs. The landowner gained the best market for his wool at the mart to which traders thronged from all parts of the world. But he had to lay in his own stock, either by exchange for his produce or with

his own money. For forty days he lived on fish; here he could buy herrings and salt fish at the lowest prices. He needed to put up his own winter store in the powdering tub, and he purchased salt at half the rate which the country dealer demanded, and of much better quality. He wanted sheep medicines, verdigris and copperas, or, best of all, tar, and he could buy it by the barrel at half the retail price. Cloth and leather, linen and fur, kitchen vessels of iron or brass,—I am writing of what I find was actually bought,—could be obtained here at reasonable or natural prices. Nothing was too cumbrous or too costly for a mediæval fair, for if the dealer did not find customers here, he could find them nowhere else. It was frequented by noble and serf, by churchman and soldier, by merchant or trader, and peasant, by monk and craftsman. And it was at these gatherings, a veritable parliament of the people, that discontent ripened into action; that doings in church and state were discussed; that Straw and Ball laid their plans, and the Lollards whispered their doubts. Only the king was exempt from toll, and it was said that his tenants in ancient demesne shared the privilege. But that the court of pie-powder, or the lord of the franchise, showed much consideration to these favoured tenants may well be doubted.

I am drawing no imaginative picture. Sixty years ago, a visit to an autumn fair, for the sake of laying in winter supplies, was part of the ordinary life of a small country gentleman or a wealthy yeoman. Here he got bales of West of England cloth for his household, hides and uppers for shoes and boots, cheese in districts where dairy farming was not practised, and a host of conveniences and rare luxuries. Some of Wedgwood's finest pottery was regularly sold over southern England at village fairs; and in the old days of differential and sumptuary duties, upright and pious men, who would have defrauded no man consciously, thought it no harm if, in the inner recess of the booth, they bargained for a keg of French brandy, or a case of Hollands, or a roll of ribbon, or a yard of lace. So a century and a half before, or over two centuries, books, which would have hardly found a sale by any modern means, were circulated, even when they

were unlicensed. In a curious day-book of an Oxford bookseller of the sixteenth century, preserved in Corpus College library, the pious dealer notes his sale of books at St. Frideswide's and St. Giles' fairs, and I have constantly met with entries in the annual account of receipt and expenditure of books purchased for college libraries at these universal and important marts. I cannot, indeed, conceive how the writings of such an author as Prynne could have been disposed of except at the places which were at once so open and so secret, where every one was welcome, and those who were unwelcome could, with common prudence, so easily escape detection. For in a fair, where all were strangers, no one was a stranger.

None of the English fairs were so important as the great and famous fair of Stourbridge, whose reputation was extended over all Europe, probably in places where no European had been seen, for we are told that not only was it a mart for European goods, but for Eastern produce—for everything which could be bought at the time.

Stourbridge fair was held in a field near the monastery of Barnwell, about a mile from Cambridge, and for the profit of the corporation of that town. Its origin is unknown, the stories as to the cause of its first establishment being obviously idle. The situation of the fair was excellent. It was within easy distance of the two busy mediæval ports of Lynn and Blakeney, and was accessible by the river from the sea. Lynn, in the list of towns which I have referred to as drawn up in the middle of the thirteenth century, was the "town of merchants," and there was great activity at it. The fair was commenced and concluded with peculiar solemnity.

It was proclaimed on the 4th of September, for, in old times, the proclamation of a fair was an essential condition of the franchise. It was opened on the eighth, and the business was continued for three weeks. The field in which it was held was what is called Lammas, *i.e.*, was open and common ground during part of the year. The temporary wooden buildings erected for the purposes of the fair were commenced by custom on St. Bartholomew's Day (Aug. 24th),

and the builders of these houses were allowed to destroy corn grown on the spot with impunity if it were not cleared before that day. On the other hand, the owner of the field was empowered to destroy the booths on Michaelmas day, if they were not cleared before that time. The space allotted to the fair, about half a square mile, was divided into streets, which were named, sometimes by nations, and in each of these streets some special trade was carried on, the principal being foreign spices and fruits, ironmongery, fish, metal goods, cloth, wool, leather, and, latterly, books. But every conceivable commodity was brought hither for sale, for I have found records of every article in use at the time as purchased at Stourbridge fair. On Sept. 25th, late in the period allotted to the fair, the chief business was the purchase and sale of horses.

Purchasers frequented Stourbridge fair even from the vicinity of London, as, for example, from the religious house of Sion. The Oxford colleges bought here their stock of winter herrings and Lent fish, as well as their spices. Here they laid in salt and tar, olive oil, wax, and frankincense. As the time for closing the fair drew on, strings of waggons laden with goods were despatched to all parts of England, and the carriers bargained for the rates at which they conveyed the goods to their destination. Had I made a collection of the articles which are noted in mediæval accounts, and even later, as purchased at Stourbridge, the list would have included nearly all kinds of such goods as were purchased out of the village. It was as famous in its day as Novgorod, or Leipsic. There were few households which were possessed of any wealth which did not send a purchaser or give a commission for Stourbridge fair.

The Lombard exchanger was present to assist in the sale of goods, and to facilitate commercial transactions, for at the close of the thirteenth century the Jew was expelled from England, and lingered in such places only as could, from their great privileges, give him a secure asylum. It is stated that a Jewish colony in Oxford remained under the protection of the great University. The Venetian and Genoese mer-

chants brought with them precious store of Eastern produce, silks and velvets, stores of delicate glass and jewellery, cotton and alum. The Flemish manufacturers from Bruges and Liège, from Ghent and Mechlin, brought their linens and lawns, their diapers and holland. The Spaniard supplied iron and the best kinds of the wine which the country grew, while the commoner and cheaper growths of Guienne were abundant; and even those of Greece and Crete were found. There were currants, raisins, and almonds from the Levant, and occasionally cocoa-nuts, whose shells were fashioned into cups, and adorned with gold or silver. The Norwegian brought tar and pitch, the Hanse towns furs and amber, copper, and the choicest iron, bow-staves for the English archers, flax and thread, fustian, buckram and canvas, and the finest kinds of ornamental timber. These towns were the channel by which the precious stones of the East, set unpolished in mitre and coronet, on rings and jewelled gloves, came to the West through the markets of Russia. And these were probably the means by which the porcelain of the farthest and earliest East, the fragments of which are occasionally found in the most unlikely places, were exposed for sale in these booths. To assist in this great and varied activity, the eastern harbours were full of foreign vessels, while eastern England grew rich by the traffic. Can we doubt the interest with which franklin and bailiff, cellarer and bursar, priest and knight, frequenting this scene of unusual bustle, talked of the wonderful world before them, and discussed the geography and politics of the known world?

To this great fair came the huge wool-packs, which then formed the wealth of rural England, and were the envy of surrounding nations, on which monarchs did not disdain to trade and jest. Hither came the produce of the Cornish tin mines, stamped with the sign of the rich earl who had just bought the German empire, though his purchase was only a barren title. Here was lead from the mines of Derbyshire, and iron from the Sussex forges. Here also bargains were made for the barley of the eastern counties, to be transported, if the price fell low enough, and therefore the law, provident

for plenty among the people, permitted the export to the Flemish breweries, which more than two centuries later taught Englishmen to flavour and preserve their ale with hops.

In order to regulate the currency, to prevent the loss of specie, always an object of concern to the statesman of the middle ages, and with more reason, in order to exclude spurious or defaced coin, the officers of the king's exchange examined into the mercantile transactions of the foreign traders, and the servants of the king's exchequer collected their dues on exported products, the wool and the hides on which the foreign manufacturer depended. To supply a ready remedy against fraud and violence, against disputes on contracts and breaches of bargains, the mayor sat at his court "of the dusty feet." All classes were busy; the nobles securing what their wealth could give them in articles of luxury, their velvet robes, their costly furs, their armour from Milan, their war-horses from Spain. I have found that even the purchase of high-priced rams, doubtlessly to improve the breed of sheep and the quality of wool, was negotiated at this fair. And on holidays and Sundays some one of the numerous clergy in the diocese of Ely,—for there were more in this than in any other diocese,—or one of the monks from the neighbouring priory, said mass in the ancient chapel which still stands near the spot, the most notable relic of the greatness of this fair, now long departed and forgotten. In a less degree there were many other such gatherings in England, and Walter de Henley may have reasonably assigned eight weeks in the year as required by the farmer who frequents fairs and markets.

Ten or twelve generations ago these fairs were a necessity, three or four a great convenience, with which the country could ill dispense. At present the importance which they once possessed has passed away, and their significance is forgotten. There is no part of English social life which has been so totally altered by improved means of communication as trade, especially trade in the country. Two generations ago pedlars carried tea about in packs on their shoulders. At

the present time a country grocer can one evening bid his agent by letter free a chest of tea from bond, and the next day he can have it in stock. Goods can be carried at one-tenth the cost, time, and risk, from the centres of trade to distant villages. Migratory trade has, therefore, become superfluous and obsolete, and the great marts of the Plantagenets, of the Tudors, of the Stuarts, and of the early reigns of the later family, have degenerated into scenes of coarse amusement, and after having been granted and protected as the highest and most necessary franchises, have been tolerated for the sake of their traditions, and are now being generally suppressed as nuisances.

It remains that I should describe, as far as the existing information enables me to do so, what were the routes by which foreign, and especially Eastern, produce was introduced into this country. I need not dwell here on the coasting trade between the English ports and the Continent, from Bristol on the west, from the long coast line commencing with Fowey and ending with Dover on the south, and from the eastern ports along the coast of Kent as far north as Hull, where there were innumerable ports, some silted up and forgotten, some perhaps buried in the German Ocean. It is probable that few English vessels ventured far from Bayonne in the thirteenth century, though after the conquest of Spain at the latter end of the fifteenth, they seem to have traded as far as "the crane of Seville." I am at present concerned with the trade of the Hanse towns, and that of the routes to India.

Towards the latter end of the thirteenth century the Hanse towns appear to have been recognised by the English sovereigns; to have been established in the neighbourhood of the Tower under the name of the Alderman and Merchants of the Steelyard; and to have maintained their position, though with some reverses, till their institution was suppressed, and their representatives expelled from the kingdom by Elizabeth at the conclusion of her reign. They were an association of free towns carrying on trade, with a staple at Bergen and a treasury at Wisby, who were united for purposes of mutual protection. They appear to have

been at the height of their influence in the early part of the fifteenth century, just at the time that the Teutonic knights were extending their rule over Lithuania and Old Prussia by sheer violence and outrage. They were leagued together against these and other lawless chiefs of Eastern Europe, as the League of the Rhine was against the robber barons of the great German waterway. Their trade was in the produce of Scandinavia, of the Baltic, and of Muscovy; one of the confederation from early times till the middle of the sixteenth century being the ancient republic of Novgorod. That they were of great importance in English trade is proved by the protection accorded to them by the Court, despite the jealousy and the remonstrances of those London merchants who were not in this privileged class. They seem to have had settlements not only in London, but at Boston and Lynn. The chief cities of the four divisions into which the various Hanse towns were ranged were Lübeck, Cologne, Brunswick, and Dantzic, and the principal factories were Novgorod, London, Bruges, and Bergen. The opulence of Hanseatic prosperity is well seen in the numerous and costly churches of the town of Lübeck. This association of trading cities is a notable phenomenon in the age of feudalism and chivalry; and it is to be regretted that its history has not been better told than in the works of Mallet, Schözer, and Lappenberg.

More immediately significant, however, is the trade with the East by caravan routes and a sea passage. It is difficult for us to imagine the eagerness with which our forefathers, as far as they could afford the luxury, sought after the spices of the East. But the appetite was natural enough. Their diet was coarse; and, owing to the absence of winter food for cattle, unwholesome. They seem to have had few native condiments. It is certain that they were excessively fond of spices, and used them, when they could be procured, in all their dishes, as the cookery books of the Plantagenets testify. Spiced wine, called Hippocras, was a present to princes; and a seat near the spice box was a greater privilege than one above the salt.

The Crusades and the decline of the Eastern Empire, the latter due more than to anything else to the scandalous capture of Constantinople by the Latins, stimulated the fanaticism of the tribes which inhabited Central Asia, and soon made that caravan trade which was common and easy enough in the twelfth century all but impossible in the thirteenth. The numerous channels of trade were dried up, especially over land, and but three routes remained. In two of these, goods from India, *i.e.*, from the western coasts, were conveyed by water to Bagdad. Thence they were carried by the Tigris till a point could be reached in the river which was nearest to Seleucia and Antioch. This was in the early period the chief and most convenient course of trade. But it had been rendered dangerous, and finally blocked, by the ferocious and fanatical tribes of Mesopotamia.

The second route was from the same point to the highlands of Asia Minor and Armenia to Trebizond. This course of trade must have passed over the same, or nearly the same, ground which Xenophon travelled with his famous ten thousand. This, the most difficult and precarious route, was not so dangerously blocked as that to the Orontes and the Mediterranean. It was the opinion of Sanuto, to whom we are indebted for the narrative of the facts, that by energetic action these two ancient and convenient lines of traffic could be restored, reopened, and sufficiently guarded, if Europe in general, and the pope in particular (he is writing to one of the Avignon Popes, John XXI.) were united and public spirited. It is needless to say that the hope was disappointed.

The third route was that from Western India to Aden, thence across the desert by a nine days' journey to Chus on the Nile, from thence by a fifteen days' river transit to Babylon, *i.e.* Cairo, and thence by a canal, two hundred miles long, to Alexandria. From Aden this route went through the Sultan of Egypt's dominions; and we are informed that a toll of thirty-three per cent. was levied on all the goods which went this way. Hence the writer concludes, although the cost of package and land carriage across the old routes

were large, the tolls, if the caravan transit could be restored, were small. The spices, too, which passed through Egypt were damaged and adulterated; so that articles of the greatest value—cloves, nutmegs, and mace—went by the land road, notwithstanding the perils of the way; while pepper, ginger, frankincense, and canella, go through Egypt. The trade, too, is not one-sided. Egypt depends greatly on Europe for many products, and entirely for iron, timber, and pitch. Sanuto concludes, therefore, that by the equipment of a competent fleet, the Sultan of Egypt might be compelled to respect the feeling of Europe, and even be starved into submission.

The greater part of this Eastern trade, whether it passed into the Black Sea or the Mediterranean, by Antioch or by Alexandria, fell into the hands of the Italian cities, especially Genoa and Venice. Thence it was conveyed to western Europe, along the Upper Danube and its tributaries, and down the Rhine. The stream of commerce was slender enough, but it enriched the free cities on the banks—Ratisbon, Nüremberg, Coblentz, Mayence, and Cologne. The opulence and power of the burghers raised the cupidity and envy, and after a time secured the association, of the nobles in the neighbourhood. As the wealth of the West was poured into the lap of the Court of Rome, so the treasures of the East were distributed by the cities which lay on the road. I conclude that, heavy as the tolls were which the Sultan extorted, he must have known that the trade was too advantageous to be destroyed without a permanent loss, and too reciprocal to be sacrificed without serious danger. And so the trade went on, and in some directions flourished. For example, the manufacture of cane sugar, a very costly article, and at first confined to Sicily, was set up in Alexandria, and within a hundred years, *i.e.*, between the beginning and end of the fifteenth century, the later price sank to less than one-eighth of the rate at which it stood at the earlier date.

Still the conquest of Constantinople, the progress of the Turkish arms, and the total desolation and block of Central Asia, made the trade centres of Western Europe uneasy. The march of the Turks seemed to the fifteenth century

like that of a devouring pestilence, or of the sword of God. The battle of Belgrade was a great deliverance, but only for a time. At any rate, it was of supreme importance to get to the rear of these warlike savages, and so reach India. Hence the efforts of Henry of Portugal, a grandson of our John of Gaunt, to discover a sea passage round Africa, in the first half of the fifteenth century; the voyages of Vasco di Gama, of Columbus, and of Cabot in the second half. As is well known, the discovery of the Cape Passage and of the New World were almost simultaneous.

The discovery was not too soon. Between 1512 and 1520, Selim I., the most active and ferocious of the Turkish sultans, conquered Mesopotamia, got possession of the holy places of Arabia, and annexed Egypt to his empire. The last ancient route to the East was blocked, and though the region of spices had been opened by Portuguese enterprise to the Western world for some years, the voyage was long, dangerous, and uncertain. The price of Eastern produce rose rapidly to famine rates. The trade with the East was successively appropriated by Portugal, Spain, Holland, England; and in our own day, under better conditions, the old road of the Pharaohs and Ptolemies has been reopened, and the border of Egypt has become the water-way of India.

Before this epoch could be dreamed of, the commercial ruin of Italy set in, and with it the decline of those great cities which had been the carriers and distributors of Eastern produce. The wealth of the burghers and the resources of princes dwindled, though it is likely that few saw the causes of the decline, or could trace them to their proper origin. As the nobles grew poorer—for the trade was starved before it was annihilated—they began to oppress the peasants, and the Boors' war broke out. The discontent of town and country alike had no little influence on the temper which gave Luther a hearing and the theses of Wittenberg an ominous significance. The decline of trade, the pressure of poverty, the discontent engendered by distress, the angry inquiry into the causes of these unexplained calamities, the reference of these distresses to papal extortion and extravagance, and the out-

burst of a passionate longing for reform in the Church, are not remotely connected with the battles which Selim won at Cairo and the Pyramids, and with the break which those victories made in the commerce of the East. Then the inquiry into the causes of commercial and social decay became wider, and the discontent with authority more marked. The Western world revolted. Germany, a century after Luther's age, lay wasted and bleeding at the feet of the Austrian emperor. France was torn by wars of religion, and finally succumbed to a central despotism, while England began anew that struggle for constitutional liberty which has now, we trust, been founded securely, and to be wisely progressing, though two centuries elapsed before the mass of the people were emancipated from injurious laws,—a people which is not yet re-admitted to the constitution.

CHAPTER VI.

SOCIETY—WAGES—PROFITS.

The Labour of an Agriculturist always leaves a Margin for others—The Nobles and the Clergy—Number of the Clergy—The Incidence of Tithe in the Middle Ages, and its Proportion to Agricultural Profits and Rent—The Position of the Clergy—The Use of the learned Monk and Chronicler—Education was probably Diffused—Proofs thereof—Education of Girls in Nunneries —Oxford, its Reputation—Number of Students there—Merton's Foundations—The Fortunes of Oxford—Wages of Labour—Of Farm Hinds —Payments for Threshing—Wages high in the Eastern Counties and London —Wages in the Irish Pale—The general Distribution of Land, and its Effect on Wages—Comparison of wages in the Thirteenth and Eighteenth Centuries—The Profits of small Proprietors Estimated, and their Expenditure—Artizans few, and all Work on Raw Materials hired by Employers—Working Days in the Year—Money Wages of Artizans—Farm and Domestic Servants—Wages of Clerks and Scribes.

IT is certain that the agriculturist must earn more than is necessary for his own support before any other person can contrive to exist. It was with some reason, therefore, that the economists and Adam Smith put him in the first rank of productive labourers. However scanty may be his share in the distribution of wealth, except he abide in the ship, none can be safe. It is true that in the rudest agricultural, and even in the rudest pastoral age, the labour of the individual always produces more than is requisite for himself and his family. He can therefore be made to maintain others on his labour. Some of these consumers will benefit him, by increasing his comforts, by allowing him to devote his undivided attention to his own industry or calling, and by furnishing him with economies in the conduct of his business. Some will quarter themselves as of right or by force on his labours and their produce, and will colour their usurpation by

alleging that he owes them allegiance or duty. These claims are always most insolent and incessant when society is barbarous. As it becomes civilized, people reiterate, with apparent reason, that only the criminal and the utterly destitute are burdens on society, and that they who provide the pageantry, or are recognised as the ornaments of civil life, represent the highest utilities. It is to be hoped that labour and poverty are satisfied with this assurance, and are convinced that these pretensions are founded on a solid basis of facts. It will be found in the course of English social history that the assurance has been occasionally disputed, and the pretensions severely criticised. It is possible that the temper which disputes or criticises may occur in force hereafter, when it is not anticipated or expected.

The nobles and the clergy were the two powers in the middle ages which enforced the subjection or affirmed the duty of those who lived by labour. As both orders were engaged in industry of the same kind as that of the mass of the people, as landowner, priest, and monk were all employed on husbandry, and were all adding to the sum of visible wealth, there was a harmony of purpose and interest which made Grostête and De Montfort, the barons of London and the franklins of Kent, the monks of St. Benedict and the parson of Dale, the lord of the manor and the serf under him, all toiling and spinning, impatient critics of a foolish king, who would have no responsible councillors; and of foreign favourites, who drew income out of that to which they contributed nothing,—the Mansels, the De Valences, the herd of the Savoyards and the Poictevins. In two or three generations afterwards there begins the struggle between labour and ease, between obligations and privileges,—a struggle which commenced five centuries ago under Tyler and Ball, and has continued under various leaders and various phases into this our present unsatisfied condition.

The clergy of the thirteenth century were very numerous. There were certainly as many as in the fourteenth, when the poll-tax, which excludes the most popular and growing class of the regular clergy, the begging friars, makes them 29,161,

or about one in fifty-two of the population, male and female, which was above fourteen years of age. It is probable, indeed, that the numbers of the clergy, secular and regular, had been greatly reduced in the third quarter of the fourteenth century by the great plague and the drain which Edward's wars laid on the population.

It will be obvious that the more costly the process of agriculture, the more ungrateful the soil, and the more scanty the produce, the more onerous is the impost of a tithe of the produce, even though it may seem to supply but a small income to the recipient. The average tithe of the produce in corn and wool on the eleven estates of Merton College in the year 1333, as taken from the return of produce in that year, rendered by the bailiffs on all the farms which are cultivated by the college, and estimated at the current prices of the year, is about £4. But not more than half of the titheable area was ordinarily in the hands of the lord. The income of the parson was therefore, on an average of corn and wool, and, on this produce only, at least £8. To this must be added a further £4 at least, for the tithe on stock, and, finally, the dues, ordinary or extraordinary, payable to the rector. Now I find that, taking one estate with the others and setting the profit of bailiff cultivation, inclusive of the rents and dues paid by the tenants, at 20 per cent. on the capital (and there is good reason for believing that such a rate was realised on the average), the receipts of each estate were, on an average, £36 a year, while I have calculated the average receipts of the parson at about £15. The parson therefore received from each estate under cultivation rather more than two-fifths of the income of the lord; this income, it should be remembered, being in part derived from the agricultural operations of others, and often supplemented by the profits of glebe lands. In towns, benefices are of far greater value. Gascoigne speaks from his own knowledge of rectors who had £100 a year of annual income.

My readers may now see why the pope and the king claimed a heavier percentage tax on the clergy than they did on the laity. Unlike the rest of the community, they subsisted on

the produce of other men's labour. They often held, as I have said, glebes in addition to their tithes. These, with their personal goods, appear to have been taxed at the same rate as lay tenements and chattels, as were also lands held by spiritual persons in mortmain, and by the consent of the Crown since the 20th year of Edward I. (1292).

The estates of the monasteries are said over and over again to have comprised a third of the knight's fees in England. Most of these religious houses were founded before the close of the thirteenth century, many of them in the early ages of the Saxon polity. Only a few were founded in later times. Besides these monastic estates, the bishops and the chapters held large possessions. They added to them, especially in the fifteenth century, by procuring, through the action of the Roman court and with the connivance of the Crown, the great tithes of valuable livings, while they left a pittance to the vicar, or served the church by one of their own monks or chaplains, in which case they appropriated the fees which the piety of the age conferred on the clergy, or usage secured to their order. Hence the king, who had enacted over and over again, in the interests of the Crown, and, indeed, of the public at large, that the clergy should be debarred from adding to the real estate which they already possessed, claimed on various occasions large contributions from the religious orders and the secular clergy, and once in the thirteenth century put a novel but very effective kind of pressure on them, by withdrawing from them the protection of the king's peace, and subjecting them to a virtual outlawry.

Large as the proportion of the clergy is to the rest of the community, and it is stated that the numbers given are not exhaustive, it must be remembered that the clergy, in the widest sense of the term, contained nearly the whole of what we should call the professional classes. The architects, the physicians, the lawyers, the scribes, the teachers of the middle ages, were almost always clergymen, and when employed in these callings, were rewarded for their services with benefices. We know but few of the men who designed the great cathedrals, churches, and castles of the middle ages,—those

buildings which are the wonder of our age for their vastness, their exquisite proportions, and their equally exquisite detail. But when we do know, as it were by accident, who the builder was, he is almost always a clergyman. It seems as though skill in architecture, and intimate acquaintance with all which was necessary, not only for the design of the structure, but for good workmanship and endurance, were so common an accomplishment, that no one was at the pains to proclaim his own reputation or to record the reputation of another. It is known that we owe the designs of Rochester Castle and the Tower to one ecclesiastic. It is recorded that William of Wykeham was Edward the Third's architect at Windsor, as well as his own at Winchester and Oxford, and of various handsome churches which were built during his long episcopate. It is probable that Wayneflete designed the beautiful buildings at Magdalen College; and it is alleged that Wolsey, in his youth, planned the matchless tower, which has charmed every spectator for nearly four centuries. But no one knows who designed and carried out a thousand of those poems in stone which were the glory of the middle ages, and have been made the subjects of servile and stupid imitation in our own.

The monks were the men of letters in the middle ages, the historians, the jurists, the philosophers, the physicians, the students of nature. It is owing to their labours that we know anything of our annals, of the events by which the political history of England is interpreted. They were often frivolous, frequently credulous, but they collected the facts to the best of their ability. It is true that the material which they put into shape is far less in quantity than those voluminous archives are which are preserved in our national collection. But these, though of great collateral value, would have but little constructive importance in the absence of the chronicles which the monks compiled. This is abundantly illustrated by the history of the fifteenth century and part of the sixteenth. The archives of this time are exceedingly copious. Public documents are numerous, the rolls of Parliament are full and precise, the record of legal proceedings is very large, and there is no lack of private memoranda.

But the chronicler has disappeared, to the regret of the few authors of the time. Gascoigne, the Oxford Chancellor, is constantly indignant at the fact that the literary monk is nowhere found, that the *scriptorium* of the abbey is deserted, and chronicles are no longer compiled. He suggests the sternest measures, fine and even confiscation, for such a neglect of duty. But owing to the absence of such chronicles, the history of England from the middle of Henry the Sixth's reign to the beginning of Henry the Eighth's, between sixty and seventy years, is as dark a period as any in our annals. We depend, to a great extent, for our own history on the works of foreign authors.

In our sense of the word, these chronicles were not published. They were copied over and over in the same monastery; they were frequently inspected by monks of other houses or other orders; but they do not appear to have been accessible to a public, if any, which could read them. Hence the authors of these books are exceedingly plain spoken. Matthew Paris writes of Henry III., with whom he seems to have had more than a personal acquaintance, with a candid severity which was certainly never designed for the royal eye. But they do not, like some memoirs, appear to have been composed with a view of postponing that information to posterity which might be given when the writer was out of the reach of all who might resent his calumnies, or when a cynical avowal of licentiousness and malignity could be safely made. That the reflections of the monk took a colour from his surroundings was natural; that the indignant critic of the Roman court should have been equally angry with Grostête for striving to make the monks amenable to discipline was an intelligible inconsistency; but on the whole, when his abilities were equal to the task, the literary monk addressed himself to his labours fearlessly and honestly.

The monasteries do not appear to have become scandalous in the thirteenth century, as they were in the latter part of the fourteenth and the whole of the fifteenth. But they lacked zeal. Wealth had made them negligent, if not corrupt. Without becoming absolutely unpopular, they had

ceased to be an ideal of religious life, and piety no longer expended itself in founding establishments for the older orders. But for a time, especially in the thirteenth century, two new orders, those of Francis and Dominic, were popular, energetic, and influential, and had a great reputation for saintliness. One of the old military orders was, on the other hand, about to fall, and give the first precedent for the dissolution of a religious society, and the confiscation of its possessions.

It is a common opinion, but, I believe, a common error, that education, in the sense of reading and writing, was hardly ever acquired out of the ranks of the clergy. I cannot account for the universal practice of keeping elaborate and exact accounts if the bailiffs were wholly illiterate. I decline to believe that an official in an estate could carry in his head or verify by tallies the exceedingly numerous details which he must have supplied in order to get his assets and liabilities balanced at the end of the year to a farthing. I have seen from time to time, but rarely, a rough set of entries, evidently scrawled by a very different person from the neat and accomplished scribe who finally indites the roll. Again, we are told that schools were universal. I have alluded to them in London. I am convinced that they were attached to every monastery, and that the extraordinary number of foundation schools established just after the Reformation of 1547 was not a new zeal for a new learning, but the fresh and very inadequate supply of that which had been so suddenly and disastrously extinguished.

The bills presented by artizans and mechanics in the early period of this inquiry would not be worth keeping. But for several years during the fifteenth century, New College, in Oxford, preserved by some accident, filed and rolled up in a scrap of parchment, the tradesmen's bills which were presented and paid before the audit. They are rudely written, and are evidently the composition of persons who were not adept penmen; but they are evidence that artizans in the fifteenth century knew how to write out an account.

During the course of the same century I find it was the practice of country gentlefolks to send their daughters for education to the nunneries, and to pay a certain sum for their board. A number of such persons are enumerated as living *en pension* at the small nunnery of Swyn in Yorkshire. Only one roll of expenditure for this religious house survives in the Record Office, but it is quite sufficient to prove and illustrate the custom. The eagerness, too, with which the Lollards treasured, copied, and disseminated the Bible and the controversial works of their sect, is proof that reading and writing were not strange accomplishments among the Norwich weavers, who were the head-quarters of the Lollard movement, and offered an asylum to the proscribed and hunted teachers of the sect. The Lollards' Pit, on the other side of the Cathedral Close at Norwich, had probably as many victims as Smithfield, though the chronicle of their sufferings has not been written. It is probable, too, that Latin, such as it was, was not unfamiliar to all. The bailiff's accounts are invariably written in it. That the monks and academics should universally employ Latin was intelligible enough; but it is surely unreasonable to conclude that bailiff and lord, master and servant, should have agreed to record transactions of vital importance and minute detail in a tongue which neither of them understood, or either was ignorant of. The likelihood that Latin was generally understood is further enforced by the frequency of political songs in Latin or in a maccaroni of Latin and English. Nor were these bailiffs men in any superior position. The bailiffs of Cuxham, father and son, from the days when Merton College became possessed of the estate to the time when the whole family perished in the plague and their chattels became the property of the lords of the manor, were serfs, and so described. Inventories of chattels also designate books frequently, though they are generally of small value in the estimate.

In the middle of the thirteenth century, Oxford, which had been in existence for at least a hundred years, was at the height of its reputation as a university. "The schools"—by which title the University was generally known—were situated

on part of what is now Bodley's Library, the ground floor of which when built was devoted to the same uses as the older structure was. Oxford appears to have attracted students from all parts of the world. The reputation of Grostête, the famous bishop of Lincoln, whom succeeding ages reverenced as the greatest of English saints, though uncanonized, was reflected on the University in which he lived and taught for the greater part of his life. This was during the first half of the thirteenth century. The situation was admirable. The town is placed on a slight eminence above the river, which embraces nearly three sides of it. It is naturally protected. It possessed one or two ancient and opulent monasteries, founded in Anglo-Saxon times, and others of more recent date. On the north of the town was the royal palace of the Plantagenets, where two kings of England, Richard and John, were born. Near it was the park and manor of Woodstock. The circuit of the walls was densely packed with houses, in which students lodged, the dedication of buildings to their use greatly enhancing the value of the tenements in which they dwelt.

In the fifteenth century, Gascoigne tells us that he inspected the records of his predecessors, Chancellors of Oxford, and found that before the Great Plague, the University had thirty thousand students within its liberties. I confess that, with every respect for this pious and estimable person, the number seems to me absolutely incredible,—to be, in short, ten times more than the possible truth. That the majority of the clergy studied here is almost certain. That a large proportion of the monks were here also as students during their novitiate is proved, for large establishments, sometimes collective, as Gloucester Hall, sometimes single, as Durham College, were entirely devoted to the reception of monks. That students came from all parts of Europe is clear. It is far from unlikely that many a poor foreigner, after studying in Oxford, as Alexander V. did, returned to his country and reached the papal chair.

In the latter part of the thirteenth century, an ecclesiastic, who had long been engaged in secular business, and when advanced in life was made bishop of the small see of

Rochester, being possessed of considerable private means. and being high in favour with the king, his brother, and his sons, and even with the barons of the popular party, determined to found a house of students. At first he placed it in a Surrey village, but soon removed it to Oxford. He gave it very considerable possessions, estates indeed numerous and valuable enough for an abbey, these being partly his patrimony, partly purchases, partly donations from the king, the King of the Romans, and the younger brother of Edward I. He founded it for a warden and as many fellows as the revenues could maintain, provided for religious offices in or near the building, and prescribed that the fellows should for ever maintain a school in which his kinsfolk and others should be taught. He put certain geographical limits to the area from which his fellows should be eligible, but no other conditions. Only they should be at once excluded from the benefits of his foundation if they became monks. They were not bound to become secular clergy, or to betake themselves to any particular calling, but to be students and men of business. To use a modern phrase, the liberality of the views entertained by Merton is amazing in a thirteenth century ecclesiastic.

This foundation became the type of the Oxford colleges. It was speedily imitated at Cambridge, the earliest house of that university having statutes copied almost literally from those of the first among the Oxford colleges. For a long time, however, these institutions were almost unimportant members of the academical system into which they were planted. As Grostête attracted students from all parts of the world in the thirteenth century, so did Wiklif in the fourteenth. In the fifteenth, Oxford began to decay. At the beginning of the sixteenth it seemed likely, under the influence of Erasmus and the Humanists, to revive. But the Reformation came, and it was almost ruined, and far more seriously compromised than Cambridge was. In the seventeenth it fell under the baneful influence of Laud. In the eighteenth it sunk to its lowest degradation. It has been successively the prey of Jacobites, obscurantists, and adventurers from the

beginning of those evil days. There never has been an English institution which has been at times so noble and at times so ignoble, in which partizanship has been so contemptible and public opinion so dead.

During the epoch of its occasional reputation, the University of Oxford must have powerfully leavened English life. It is remarkable that it has developed every great religious movement in English history. The teaching of its students was carried to Bohemia in the fourteenth century, and to the Mississippi in the eighteenth. Chaucer has sketched its clerks in their student days ; Gascoigne in the decline of letters. During the short-lived ascendency of the Commonwealth, it founded what became the Royal Society. It has never been entirely without witnesses. In the eighteenth century it had great astronomers. In the nineteenth it had a great scholar. But though these men had a vast reputation outside it, they never leavened the inert mass within it. It has constantly stoned its prophets, but has never even built their sepulchres, and hardly knows their names.

The leisure classes in England in the thirteenth century were therefore a few nobles, a few opulent ecclesiastics, and a large number of clergy and scholars. The supplementary industries were those of the traders and artizans in the towns, and a very few, and those very scattered, smiths and carpenters in the villages. Even these persons, in rural districts at least, united the functions of the husbandman or labourer to that of the craft which they practised. There were, indeed, very few of the population which were wholly dissociated from agriculture. The fellows of a college, the monks in the monastery, all took their part at times in supervising at least the work of the fields. And though agriculture was unprogressive, the husbandman was diligent. His wants were few, and most of them were satisfied on the spot, and it was quite possible, by thrift and painstaking, not only to satisfy the claims of his lord and the charges of the tax collectors, but to make a store, with which to gratify his paternal ambition or to enlarge his holding.

Agricultural labourers were rarely paid by the day, but

generally by piecework. The bailiff hired hands by the year, but these were constantly paid in allowances of grain and a small sum of money. Where one does find day work paid for, it is at about the rate of 2*d.* a day for men, 1*d.* for women, ½*d.* for boys. Now it must be remembered that a penny contained at that time three times as much silver as a penny now would contain, if a pound of silver were coined into 720 pieces, instead of being, as it would be now, if silver pence were minted, cut into 792 pieces. I need not trouble my reader here with the difference between the Tower pound and the Troy pound, beyond saying that the former stood to the latter in the proportion of 15 to 16. The rarity of payment by the day is indirect evidence that the great majority of the labourers were occupied on their own holdings during a considerable part of the year. Omitting exceptional rates paid for piecework, the wages of an agricultural labourer would be at a rate of £2 11*s.* 8*d.* a year, or taking, besides Sundays, twenty days for church holidays, £2 10*s.* In harvest and hay-making time, which may have well lasted five weeks, his wages would be doubled, and this would raise them to £2 15*s.* His wife was paid for harvest piecework as well as he was, and could earn another five shillings, raising his amount to £3. If he had two children fit for employment, at their rates they might raise the total earnings of the family to £3 15*s.* or £4.

When the hinds were hired by the year, they received a quarter of corn, at say 4*s.* every eight weeks, and 6*s.* money wages, *i.e.*, about the value of 32*s.* a year. They were always, however, boarded in harvest time and at periods of exceptional employment. This board, as I find from other sources, was reputed to cost from 1¼*d.* to 1½*d.* a day, and if we take six weeks as the time thus employed, the real wages which they received would be in the aggregate about 35*s.* 8*d.* a year. Such hinds were undoubtedly single men. Occasionally the labourer serves more masters than one, and his allowances and money are therefore reduced. Thus the swineherd is the servant of the whole village; the deye, or dairy servant, of more than one or two; the shepherd frequently of two persons. During the

harvest quarter the money wages are always three times the amount of what is paid in the other quarters. This rule is of course adopted in order to prevent the hind from deserting his employment during the most profitable time of the labourer's year, and is indirect evidence of the voluntariness of the engagement. Had the labour of the resident serf been entirely at his lord's discretion, such a distribution of money wages would have been a superfluous precaution.

The wages of agricultural labour were higher in the Eastern counties and the neighbourhood of London than in the rest of England. So copious has been the information which I have collected as to the price of agricultural labour and produce in England at the close of the thirteenth and through the greater part of the fourteenth century, that I have found it in my power to construct a table of the prices of one kind of labour from five districts of England,—east, west, south, midland, and north. The labour which I took as an illustration was that of threshing a quarter of the three kinds of corn—wheat, barley, and oats—in the several districts. The rate of payment is, speaking generally, that of 3, 2, and 1. No better illustration of labour by the piece could be conceived. The process was in universal demand, and was not, as far as I have seen, provided by customary labour. It is that kind of labour which is, relatively speaking, the cheapest, for it can be carried on at all times of the year under cover, in good and bad weather, and at the discretion of the employer and labourer. It was comparatively easy work, for our forefathers cut their corn high on the stalk, leaving the straw for a second reaping or mowing at their convenience or discretion, or even for ploughing in. All corn was, as a rule, reaped, little or none was mown; and as the reaper took only such a length of straw to his sickle as would be sufficient to bind by, it is clear that it was easily spread and threshed. The labour of threshing the three principal kinds of corn-growing grasses differs with the difficulty of separating the seed from the husk, and the graduated rate of payment expresses the difficulty with exactness. It is 3*d.* for wheat, 2*d.* for barley, 1*d.* for oats. Winnowing was performed by the women, at about a farthing the

quarter, the fan being provided by the employer, as, indeed, most tools and implements are.

The higher rates paid in the eastern counties are to be explained by the competition of manufacturing labour, just in the same way as now the wages paid to agricultural labourers in the manufacturing districts of England are far in excess of those customary in purely rural parts, and would, if they were familiar to the farmers of the south, become another of those foolish and futile cries by which English agriculturists habitually deafen and blind themselves to those facts which have to be comprehended before the agricultural problems of our own time can be solved. It does not, however, appear that the price of agricultural products is higher in the east than it was elsewhere. On the contrary, Norfolk prices are generally low, especially for its staple product, barley. Again, London wages are high, for prices are high in or about London, and it is reasonable to conclude that the strongest and the most skilful labour gravitated towards the metropolis, or was to be regularly found there. I may add here that the Anglicised part of Ireland, in which Roger Bigod had several estates, and in which there were thriving manufactures, paid as high wages as England did. The glimpse which the preservation of the bailiff's accounts from Bigod's Irish estates gives us as to the position of the English pale in Ireland during the last few years of the thirteenth century is instructive, and, I believe, unique. These estates were in the counties of Wexford, Carlow, and Kildare. Now in Arthur Young's time (Southern Tour, p. 81) threshing near Braintree was paid at the rate of 2*s.* a quarter for wheat, and 1*s.* for barley and oats. If we take the multiple of twelve as a fair and, on the whole, exact representative of the rise in the price of provisions and the other necessaries of life between the years 1260 and 1760, the labourer in the time of Henry III. was paid better than he was in the first year of George III. I reckoned, when estimating the position of the mediæval labourer by the side of his descendants in the eighteenth century, that the former received for the labour of threshing rather more than one-eighteenth of the wheat he threshed, rather more than a twenty-second part

of barley, and rather less than a fourteenth part of oats, taking the rate of wages and the price of grain as the factors in the calculation. In the eighteenth century, the peasant got one twenty-fourth part of wheat and barley, and a one-and-twentieth part of the oats he threshed.

I have little doubt that the comparative price of labour at these remote periods, separated by five centuries, and the relatively advantageous position which the peasant occupied at this period, are to be ascribed to the general distribution of land. When persons are engaged in a calling which regularly demands a particular kind of labour for its conduct, and an external demand as regularly arises for the same kind of labour, the tendency of the market for labour is to rise, *i.e.*, the labourer is able to require and obtain more than he would if he had no identical calling of his own to follow. It has been noticed that in a country of small agricultural proprietors hired labour is always absolutely or relatively dear, and that contracts with labourers for harvest or other work were always to the advantage of the labourer. But if the labour given by the small proprietors is a bye occupation, *i.e.*, it is followed when the requirements of the labourer's ordinary calling are satisfied, the remuneration is low. Hence Adam Smith (Book I., Chap. x.) declines to admit such kinds of labour into his estimate of the causes which determine the rate of wages. Agricultural labour, hired by employers, would be dear; home industries, such as spinning and weaving and similar employments, would be carried on for a small or an inappreciable remuneration.

The facts to which I have referred will be further illustrated by an examination into the prices paid for such kinds of labour as that for which there was or might be a comparatively urgent demand. The persons who first fixed labour rents were shrewd enough to see that it was most important for them to tie their tenants to the obligations of ploughing, hoeing, mowing, and reaping, because three at least of these operations had to be undertaken at what might be a critical time for the agriculturist, and certainly would be in districts where there were numerous peasant holders. Now it is clear

that this customary labour, judiciously exacted, would tend to depress the price at which it would be hired in the open market. For the lord and his bailiff had only to bargain for such services as were over and above what would be afforded by the regular hinds on the farm and the customary labour of the tenants. The latter they could exact, the former they secured by larger money allowances, by giving board in addition to payments in corn and money, and by a few luxuries in harvest time. They knew, to be sure, that the enforced labour was not of a satisfactory kind, hence they were always ready to commute it for a reasonable money payment, with consequences which we shall see hereafter.

In the thirteenth century, wheat was reaped at a fraction over 5*d.* an acre, barley at 5½*d.*, oats and rye at 4½*d.* Beans, peas, and vetches at 5*d.*, or a fraction less. Hay was mown at 5*d.* an acre. The discrepancy between the price at which rye and oats, on the one hand, and wheat and barley on the other, were reaped, is to be accounted for by the fact that the rye crop, always a small and unimportant one, comes to maturity earlier than any other kind of grain, and therefore at a time when there is a less energetic demand for hands, while oats can lie out with less injury than any other kind of grain during wet. Barley, too, was a heavier crop than wheat.

In Arthur Young's time, to revert to a comparison made above, the average price, compiled from very numerous entries made in his various tours, paid for the service of reaping wheat was 5*s.* 6*d.* an acre, *i.e.*, a little over twelve times what was paid five centuries before; but so little over that the rate may be considered, in view of the multiple employed before, as inappreciable. Estimated in the price of wheat, the reaper of the thirteenth century received about one-twelfth of a quarter for his labour. During the period of Young's tours, which were made during the remarkable abundance which characterized the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, the receipts of the reaper of wheat were about one-ninth of a quarter. But in the eighteenth century, all other kinds of corn were mown, the labourer receiving, on an average, 1*s.* 2*d.* an acre for corn and hay; while the

thirteenth-century peasant received, again taking twelve as the multiplier, over 5*s.* an acre for his labour. Now the average price of the other kinds of grain, which were paid at the higher rate, is 3*s.* 6*d.* a quarter, and for this part of his work the labourer received in value about the eighth of a quarter, or a bushel of grain for the labour of reaping a quarter of the produce. This cost of labour corresponds with that given in Walter de Henley's estimate, who sets the whole cost of cultivating an acre of corn at 3*s.* 1½*d.* an acre, and reckons the reaping at 5*d.*, the carrying at 1*d.* But taking the average price of barley, oats, and beans in Arthur Young's time, we shall find that the labourer earned, on an average, not more than the nineteenth of a quarter for the labour of mowing them. It is clear, moreover, that the average crop of the eighteenth century was more than double that of the thirteenth, as may be readily discovered from a very hasty examination of what I have shown in my history of agriculture and prices on the one hand, and the facts of English husbandry which Arthur Young has so copiously collected on the other.

It remains that I should attempt to point out what were the profits of such a small proprietor as is described on the Cuxham and Ibstone manors, as having a holding, for which he pays a quit-rent, or a quit-rent and service, at about 6*d.* an acre; his holding being about twenty acres of arable land. If he carried on his cultivation in the same way and to the same advantage, one thing being put against the other, as the lord did on the land which he held in his own hands and cultivated by his bailiff with the assistance of hired labourers, though we might expect with reason that his small husbandry would be more profitable, he should expect to obtain, by a capital of about £15, about £3 10*s.* profit, out of which he would have to pay 10*s.* for rent and dues. In addition to his land, and contributing to the profit which he earned, would be his pasture rights in common, field, waste, and wood. These would be after the rate obtained by the lord, though he might have to pay a few pence for the pannage of his hogs. If, in addition to the labour which he gives to his own little

homestead, he, his wife, and his boys take their share in harvest work and winter threshing, in hoeing, and similar avocations, he would find, as the evidence of numberless records testify, no difficulty in bringing his aggregate earnings up to £4 annually, or even more; for I have shown above that this sum was not unattainable by the free labourer who had only a cottage and curtilage, but got regular farm work at day wages. I am content, however, to take the less sum.

The distribution of his income would be as follows:— Taking the average price of wheat, and assuming that four quarters a year were sufficient for the support of the farmer and his family, the first and heaviest charge on his resources will be £1 3*s.* 6*d.* for bread. I have taken the price of the best wheat which comes to market, and has been screened from the lighter produce. Let us suppose that he uses the inferior produce for home consumption, and, with a very liberal margin, the difference between the price of the best and of inferior corn, fully 25 per cent., will be amply sufficient to reimburse the miller for his labour and his toll. Two quarters of second quality malt may be allowed for the home manufacture of beer. This allowance, nearly a bushel of malt every three weeks among the members of a small family, though liberal, is not excessive, for it gives about four gallons of tolerably sound ale weekly to the whole number. The cost of malt will be 7*s.* 7*d.* Now if we allow 800 lbs. of meat at the rate of ¼*d.* per lb., its ordinary price in the thirteenth century, as we may find from the weight and prices of oxen and sheep, a further sum will be expended on beef, mutton, and bacon of 16*s.* 8*d.* This puts the cost of maintenance on a somewhat liberal scale of £2 7*s.* 9*d.* a year. The residue of his charges would be for clothing. But much of this was homespun russet cloth, and hempen or linen shirting; a pair of rude boots, worth about 2*s.*, and of leather gaskins, which do not cost more than 1*s.* 6*d.*, being all that was necessary for him to purchase, though substitutes of home manufacture would doubtlessly be found even for these. But if we take the whole of his purchases together, they will not amount to more than 12*s.* 3*d.*, the sum needed to raise his

expenditure to £3. He might, therefore, be supplied abundantly from the produce of his farm, debiting himself with the cost of his own produce, and laying aside 20*s.* a year, with which hereafter, as opportunity might arise, he might increase his holding, portion his daughters, provide for his widowed mother, or put forward his son in the Church, or any similarly advantageous calling.

Such may be fairly taken to represent the receipts and expenditure of these small landowners, who were, as I have frequently stated, so numerous in the thirteenth century. I have taken the schedule of profit and loss which a lord's accounts supply as the basis on which to estimate a tenant's income and outgoings, and I have gathered my inferences from years of undoubted prosperity, though not of exceedingly low prices. I have taken the expenditure not from the prices of a few years or of one or two years, but from the general average of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and so have allowed for a considerable margin. Again, I have included only the simplest necessaries in the family expenditure. Even after I have reckoned £3 as farming profit, there is certain to have been some produce of cheese, milk, and butter, which was consumed by the family, besides poultry and eggs, which would hardly have been reckoned cost or loss by the small proprietor. And lastly, in order to avoid the suspicion of exaggeration, I have taken the quantity of earnings from a period preceding the great change in the circumstances of the labourer and yeoman, to which I shall presently allude, though I have gathered the estimate of his expenditure from a period which includes the rise in prices consequent on that change. That a working farmer with his wife and children could find opportunity for more labour than that required to cultivate twenty acres of arable land, I have taken for granted. In Arthur Young's time, when agriculture was far more developed and land was much more highly cultivated than was thought possible, or, indeed, expedient, in a previous age, twenty acres per head of labour is reckoned the standard of excellent management. It is clear, too, that there was a periodical demand for labour, since

the Statute of Labourers, passed in the middle of the fourteenth century, though it strove to prevent peasants from migrating from one parish to the other in search of higher wages, made an exception in favour of those who temporarily travelled from the north to the south in quest of harvest work. The statute, though enacted in favour and with a view to control the prices of labour, is evidence of a custom with which agriculturists had been long familiar.

I am sensible that these arithmetical calculations, which I have indeed reduced to the narrowest limits consistent with accuracy, will, after all, be deterrent to the general reader, if any such care to examine what I have written, and will be distasteful even to the student of economical history. But I have no choice in presenting them. Had the views which I have proved elsewhere, which are the result of long and careful calculations, gathered from very numerous and unquestionable facts, been already incorporated into the history of the English race, in place of those absurd fables and careless guesses which have hitherto been taken as the history of the English people,—if there had been any inclination to search into the life and doings of the great mass of our forefathers, instead of skimming the froth of foreign policy, of wars, of royal marriages and successions, and the personal character of the puppets who have strutted on the stage of public life, I might have dispensed with this marshalling of facts and figures. But even in English political history, writers have only attempted to deal with the antiquities of forms, and not with the realities which lie beneath these forms; much less have they attempted to revive, as Hallam wished, though he thought the wish hopeless, the life of a single village in mediæval England. To do this, even when the materials are discovered, is impossible without facts and figures, and the student of what is the genuine life of our forefathers, and withal the conditions under which modern society has been instructed and developed, may well comfort himself with the conviction, which will be overwhelmingly demonstrated as he labours honestly and fairly on his materials, that the man who first formulated the statement that "nothing is more false than

facts, except figures," uttered a shallow epigram. The falsehood is in the incompetent use of them.

The number of artizans in mediæval England must have been very small. In my early researches, I was under the impression that the smith was in every village, the carpenter in most. But I seldom find these personages enumerated in the rent-rolls of the manors, and I am persuaded that their trade would have been designated had they been generally present. Nearly every village had its miller, but he was a privileged person, sturdy in defence of rights, for which he paid the lord handsomely, and reputed to be not over honest in his calling. The miller, if the village stream was a scanty one, had always a standing quarrel with the owners of the upper water meadows, whom he accused of keeping back his supplies, and against whose interests, in the dry season, he was charged with furtively raising his weir. But the smith and the carpenter served, I suspect, several villages together, as the country doctor does now.

In almost all cases the artizan supplied labour only, and not materials. Even where costly and elaborate iron work is designed and constructed, the smith receives the iron from his employer, fashions it from designs supplied to him, or perhaps devised by himself, accounts for the residue of the raw material, and receives his pay for the work. His stock-in-trade was his forge and bellows, his hammers, anvils, and pincers. That he wrought up scrap-iron is certain, for one product of his craft is always bought in a manufactured state, lath-nails, and frequently other kinds of nails. So the carpenter and wheelwright fashion the manor timber, the mason uses the stone and lime which his employer has bought; and lead in pigs, with solder for joints, is served out in bulk or mass, is rolled, or cast and smelted by the plumber. Even the glazier receives the purchases of his employer, and fits them into casement or frame. As might be expected, the Eastern counties and London are the earliest localities in which the capitalist artizan who deals in finished goods is to be found, and his transactions are generally with opulent individuals or with wealthy corporations. The capita-

list employer, the first middle man, is entirely unknown till the seventeenth century, and the capitalist purchaser of raw materials, the later middle man, is later still in the economy of society.

Hence the wages of the artizan are generally reckoned by the day, more rarely by the piece, though where piecework can be conveniently given, it is found. Thus the pair of sawyers are constantly paid by the day, but nearly as often by the hundred of boards sawn, this quantity being about the amount an average pair of sawyers could turn out in a day's work. In the thirteenth century we find traces of a different quality in carpenter's labour, the best being paid at $3\frac{1}{2}d.$ a day, the ordinary at $3d.$ Artizans' wages are from 25 to 60 per cent. higher in London, where they reach $4d.$ and $5d.$ A pair of sawyers will get $7d.$ a day together, or from $7d.$ to $8d.$ the hundred. Where labour is of special quality, or impressed, the rate rises in the country to $4d.$ or even $5d.$ The master mason or master carpenter received slightly higher wages, and sometimes in addition to his weekly earnings a yearly fee. At the building of Newgate Gaol in 1281, one set of carpenters receives $5\frac{1}{2}d.$, another $5d.$, a third $4d.$; the sawyers have $9\frac{1}{2}d.$ the pair, and the masons $5d.$ a day each.

From 312 to 252 or 235 days are reckoned in the mason's year. That of the carpenter, who is independent of the weather, and can work under cover continuously, is as long as the first of these quantities. The winter's wages are about 25 per cent. less than those of the other seasons; but the winter seems to have been limited to the months of December and January. This fact, which I have frequently noticed, is proof that the hours of labour were not long. They seem to have been not more than eight hours a day, and at a later period in the economical history of labour the eight hours' day seems to be indicated by the fact that extra hours are paid at such a rate as corresponds to the ordinary pay per hour for eight hours, being a little in excess. Hence the artizan, if he were minded to do so, would have time during summer for some agricultural employment. It would seem that this occupation of spare time was not unusual, for I have found employers of

artizans occasionally purchasing agricultural produce from the mason and carpenter, or from their wives. Extra hours are often paid for when the work is pressing and time was an object. On the other hand, employers reckoned halves of days, and when the artizan was in regular employment carefully noted and deducted his absences. These facts are more noticeable when the workmen are employed by the king, who generally pays a higher wage for his men than his subjects do, and if he impressed them at a distance for his service, paid an allowance for their journey to and from their homes.

The mediæval labourer took very few holidays. There is a general impression that, previous to the Reformation, much of the labourer's time was wasted in the compulsory idleness of religious festivals. How far this is true in foreign countries, I do not know, but it is certainly not true of mediæval England. An employment for 312 days leaves only one holiday besides the Sundays. Walter de Henley reckons the working days of the year as 308, which gives only five holidays. In all the continuous accounts which I have seen of labour payments for work extending over a long period, the workmen, with the exception of one set, cease from working on Sundays. The exception is the building accounts of Henry VIII. Here the clerk of the works draws out the list of all persons in the king's employ, and presumes that they will work six days in the week only, and cease from labour on Sundays and certain holidays. But the hurry in which the king was, put such pressure on the men, that they not only worked extra hours, but many of them by night, and constantly on Sundays and holidays. I cannot but think that if there was conceived to be anything very unusual or highly improper in this, the king would not have allowed such work, especially as the practice begins, as far as the accounts give me information, after Henry's quarrel with the Pope, and during the time when his conscience constrained him to compensate for his schism by the severity of his orthodoxy. But work on holidays was paid at rather higher rates than that done on ordinary days. It is singular that in these

account books, four of the principal artizans sign every page, as though they were a check on the clerk of works.

It is not always easy to determine whether the artizan was boarded as well as paid. At times he is certainly not. At times it is stated that he is boarded, and the cost of his board, generally about half his ordinary wages, is noted. But very often, especially when the job for which he is engaged is a short one, the work of a day or two, and he is employed by a corporation where an abundant table is kept, and the servants have their separate meal, the labourer appears to get his meal also. In the fifteenth century, the abbot of St. Edmund's-Bury engages an architect for certain new work. He and his servant are to be boarded, lodged, and each to have a livery by the year, and £10 for the two. The architect's board is to be that of a gentleman, his servant's to be that of a yeoman, *i.e.*, the architect is to sit at the table where the gentlemen-in-waiting of this opulent abbot were fed, and the man is also to be provided at the upper servants' table. He and his man were to be fined at a fixed rate if they were absent more than two days in each quarter of the year. But in every case workmen had an allowance of beer and bread, which went by the name of Nonschenes, a word which, I presume, is the origin of our modern luncheon.

An artizan, therefore, if he worked for 300 days in the year, was able to earn from £3 15*s.* to £4 7*s.* 6*d.*, according to the reputation which he possessed as a workman, or even, in exceptional cases, as much as £5. In London, his pay might be as much as £6 5*s.* to £6 17*s.* 6*d.* a year. It may, however, be doubted whether artizans could safely count on such continuous employment. In such a case there was the recourse to agricultural operations, in which we may be certain that almost every adult was experienced and competent.

The ordinary hired servants on a farm for a year were, besides the bailiff, three ploughmen, three drivers, a carter, a reaper, a swineherd, a shepherd, a cowherd or dairywoman, and a cook. This was the establishment on a farm of two carucates, *i.e.*, of about 240 acres. In places where horses were bred, there were grooms, or breakers, and stable men, one of whom acts

as marshal or farrier to the stud. The domestic servants of a private house or college were few, beyond the ordinary officials,—butler, porter, steward or manciple, cook, and server, with their under servants. If the college had a garden they had servants there, and if the house kept horses, grooms. But attendance at table seems to have been performed by poorer students or servitors, perhaps even waiting in chambers and cleaning them. A large society keeps rarely more than one laundress, and, if we may judge by her usual rate of remuneration, the labours of her calling were not incessant or onerous.

As compared with ordinary servants in husbandry, the domestics in a large house or an opulent corporation were well paid. They were boarded, lodged, provided with a livery annually, the quality and quantity of the cloth being inferior to that served out to the other inhabitants of the house or corporation, and received wages in money, ranging from 40*s.* a year, the highest generally paid, to 13*s.* 4*d.*, the lowest. Such servants frequently saved money, and obtained a start for their children. It has constantly been my chance to see the names of college servants, which appear in the next generation as traders in the university, and, later on, as the founders of county families.

On the other hand the wages of clerks and scribes were very low. The scribe who writes out the long account of the Cuxham bailiff, a document which fills thirteen closely printed octavo pages, and balances all the items, gets only two shillings for his trouble, though a further present of a similar sum is given him by favour. A clerk of works is not so well paid as an artizan. The labour of copying and illuminating is very poorly remunerated. The three chaplains whom Henry III. maintained at his hunting lodge of Woodstock get only 50*s.* a year each; while an advocate, retained to defend a will, is remunerated by 6*s.* 8*d.*, and the fees to attorneys were very small. I have found one fee paid for conducting a case, which is also 6*s.* 8*d.*

My reader therefore, if he has the patience to pursue this dull account, will see that the life of our ancestors, though laborious, was not without its hopes. All the necessaries of

life in ordinary years, when there was no dearth, were abundant and cheap, and even in dear years, the margin of wages, or profits, over the bare wants of life was considerable enough to fill up the void, even though the labourer had to subsist for a time on some cheaper food than wheaten bread. Meat was plentiful; poultry found everywhere; eggs cheapest of all. The poorest and meanest man had no absolute and insurmountable impediment put on his career, if he would seize his opportunity and make use of it.

I am well aware that in many particulars he was far behind his descendants in the conveniences and comforts of life. His diet, as I have allowed, was coarse, though plentiful, and during great part of the year was unwholesome. It took three centuries before the Dutch, who were for a long time the centre of economical civilization, were able to discover and adopt those succulent and wholesome roots which have given health to man by banishing the loathsome diseases of the middle ages, and have rendered it possible to improve the breeds of cattle. I am well aware that such medical skill is now at the service of the poorest as princes and prelates desired, but were entirely without, in the middle ages. I am quite familiar, as we all are, with the victories which human ingenuity has acquired over nature, and how man's skill has forced into his service the most common and the most unlikely agencies. I know that four grains of wheat and barley, or any other grain, are produced by modern tillage where one was with difficulty raised before; that the ox has been selected, bred, and fed from 400 lbs. or less to 1,200 or more; that sheep which once yielded a pound of wool precariously now produce seven or nine pounds; that the powerful cart-horse has taken the place of the wretched and stunted pony of the old English breed, and that all other animals which are destined to the service of man have been selected, till there seems nothing to desire in their shape, size, and utility. I see in all directions that human toil has been supplemented, and sometimes superseded, by mechanical agencies, which genius has invented and patience has elaborated. I know that many of our fellow countrymen have exchanged squalid habitations and uncleanly

practices for houses built by the newest lights of sanitary science, and for fastidious cleanliness. I am alive to the fact that what were once the luxuries of the very few have often become the habitual comforts of the many, and that enterprize has scoured the earth in order to make these and newer luxuries abundant and cheap. I know that owing to the spread of knowledge, the adaptation of industry, the energy of invention, and the extension of trade, the population of England and Wales is tenfold what it was six centuries ago; that trim gardens, magnificent mansions, noble parks, rows of handsome houses, vast and splendid cities, occupy sites which were covered by squalid hovels or frequented by wild boars, curlews, and bitterns, or were marshy fens and wild moors. I can see, without being reminded, that the most lofty and subtle pleasures, those of literature, are now common and profuse, and that the world of civilization is so strong that there seems no possible danger of its becoming destroyed by a new incursion of barbarians, not even of those barbarians whom it creates. The inhabitants of this country, at least those whom the historian and the politician think worth instructing and consulting, enjoy the refined pleasure of criticising, and, as many of them believe, conducting in no small degree the affairs of their own country, and even of other peoples, and have got far away from the time when the Englishman believed it his interest to support his sovereign's dream of foreign conquest, because in this way, as he fondly fancied, he could lighten his own burdens at home. I do not need to be told that the wealth of London is such, that a single block of buildings pays a higher rent to its fortunate owner than was derived from the whole customs of the port in the days of the Plantagenets and Tudors; that in a few hours a loan could be raised in London sufficient to equip and provision an army more numerous than all the men-at-arms were in mediæval Europe, and this probably without deranging the course of trade or materially interfering with the functions of credit. And I suspect that when we are invited to consider all these things and more of the same nature, as the prodigious strength of modern governments, the bound-

less resources of modern societies, the enormous accumulations of inherited opulence, the priceless collections of art and letters, the ceaseless activity of enterprise, and the ever increasing discoveries of science, it is fancied that a complete answer is given to those who entertain misgivings, because they believe that there is a reverse to the picture, another side to the shield, which those triumphant eulogies on modern progress would have us conceal or forget. But I am convinced that modern civilization will be judged, not by what it has done, but by what it has left undone; not by what it has remedied, but by what it has failed to heal, or at least to have relieved; not by its successes, but by its shortcomings. It may be that the progress of some has been more than counterbalanced by the distresses and sorrows of many, that the opulence and strength of modern times mocks the poverty and misery which are bound up with and surround them, and that there is an uneasy and increasing consciousness that the other side hates and threatens.

It may be well the case, and there is every reason to fear it is the case, that there is collected a population in our great towns which equals in amount the whole of those who lived in England and Wales six centuries ago; but whose condition is more destitute, whose homes are more squalid, whose means are more uncertain, whose prospects are more hopeless than those of the poorest serfs of the middle ages and the meanest drudges of the mediæval cities. The arm of the law is strong enough to keep them under, and society has no reason to fear their despair; but I refuse to accept the superficial answer, that a man is an admirer of the good old times because he insists that the vaunts of civilization should be examined along with, and not apart from, its failures. It is not possible to give the solution of one problem, the growth of opulence, and to refuse all attention to the other problem, the growth of penury.

I do not assert that my researches into the economical history of England will throw a clear light on these complex and contradictory phenomena; but I am convinced that till we learn how it was that this society has grown and been

collected, and how wealth has been distributed between labourer, capitalist employer, and those who enter on the rest of the inheritance which labour has earned, we shall only be dealing with the most superficial elements and the least important problems of social life; we shall be offered remedies which are more dangerous than the disease; we shall be invited to adopt, as a complete solution of a profound difficulty, that which would make the confusion more inextricable, and the prospect of unravelling it more hopelessly remote, if we accepted it without reserve, examination, or anxiety.

CHAPTER VII.

THE KING AND HIS EXTRAORDINARY REVENUES.

Death of Henry—Legislation of Edward—The Statute of Entails and of Free Sale—Mortmain—The Creation of the House of Commons—The Conquest of Wales and Scotland—Edward's Struggle with the Church—Edward II.: his Political Errors—The Murder of Stapledon—The Claim of Edward III. to the French Throne—The Acquisition of Calais, of Boulogne, and Dunkirk—The English Troops—The Distress of the French Peasant—The French Nobility—The English Peasant—The Cost of the Hundred Years' War—Richard's Reign—The Finance of the War with France—Fifteenths and Tenths—The Wool Tax, the Aid, the Tax on the Parishes—The Poll Tax—The Incidence and Percentage of Fourteenth Century Taxation—Taxes for the King, for the Pope—The Wages of Proctors and Members—Taxation necessarily direct—Attempts to escape Taxation.

THE last years of Henry III. were passed in profound quiet. The rebellious barons were pardoned, the administration was improved, and the king made peace with all. So safe seemed the State, that the king's eldest son and successor, the warlike and politic Edward, had left England on the last crusade, and did not return to his country and kingdom till nearly two years after his father's death.

The reign of Edward is well known as an epoch in land legislation. It also saw the commencement of regular parliaments, to which the prelates and lords, the knights of the shire, the citizens and burgesses of the cities and towns, and the barons of the Cinque Ports were summoned. The king conquered and garrisoned Wales, almost conquered and garrisoned Scotland. He published, with or without the authority of his parliaments, a variety of statutes, many of which affect the law of England to this day. He banished

the Jews from England. He quarrelled with the clergy, and treated them in so peremptory a fashion that he broke their spirit. He confirmed the charters of his predecessors, and surrendered the right of tallaging his proper subjects at his will.

The land legislation of Edward, under which entails were permitted, and subinfeudation was forbidden, is well known. The former law is memorable from the importance which the practice of entail assumed in later times; the latter, because it made a sale of lands common, and extinguished the creation of manors. I am persuaded that in early times, and for many years after Edward's legislation, entails were few, unimportant, and small, and that the condition which the statute declared to be for ever binding, and not obsolete when it was satisfied, was intended to secure the status of a new body of small military tenants, almost always of the male sex, who would be perpetually dependent on their lord, called the donor of their estate, and whose interests would revert to the lords when male heirs failed the object of the gift. It is, I think, impossible that I should have never found instances in rentals of such tenancies in tail, if, as is assumed, these were freely and largely created. We are told, indeed, that during the great war of succession, as soon as the combatants discovered that defeat might involve forfeiture, it became the practice to entail the great estates, and as tenancies in tail were protected from forfeiture as well as incapable of alienation, that the entail became a precaution. If this be the fact, the protection was not enduring, for Margaret began the system of parliamentary attainder,—a precedent which was followed by sovereign after sovereign, till by an enactment of Henry VIII. the forfeiture of entails followed on a judicial conviction of treason.

The plea for the statute under which subinfeudation was put an end to, and manors could no longer be created, was the loss of dues to the lord, owing to the multiplicity of interests carved out of the estate which was subject to such dues. It is said to have been passed at the instance of the nobles. It provided that the purchaser of an estate, to whose

action it gives full freedom, should hold of the same person as that from whom the vendor held his estate, and that no more mesne or middle lords should be created. That it immediately served the interests of the nobles is probable, and this, indeed, is the avowed motive of the enactment; but it seems to me still more markedly, though more remotely, to have served the interest of the Crown, since escheats would finally come to the Crown, and anything which limited the number of subordinate interests in the same estate must have aided in securing the rights of the only person who was ultimate heir of every subject. But I think it cannot be doubted that by stereotyping the existing manors and their tenancies, it gave an additional security to the lowest class of tenants, those in villeinage, whose status would now be defined and even published, or at least be open to inspection. We are told, and I can well believe it, that the lawyers favoured the legal irremovability of the serfs, and materially assisted them in becoming what they were styled, a generation or two later, tenants by copy, or by custom of the manor. But though this famous statute stopped subinfeudation, the old practice was virtually revived in the practice which rapidly grew of charging estates with grants, annuities, rent-charges, and analogous burdens, so that in many cases the nominal receipts of the owner were largely diminished by the liabilities which he had created, or inherited, or had to accept when he purchased. Thus, to quote an example, when Wykeham was founding his colleges at Oxford and Winchester, he purchased an estate in Oxfordshire from the family of Lisle. As usual, the old bailiffs' rolls, some of them going back to the commencement of the first Edward's reign, were handed over at the time of purchase, and are preserved, with those which were drawn up after the property came into the possession of New College. One of the Lisles had charged this estate with the payment of five quarters of wheat on November 1st to the monks of Bicester; and the liability is continued to the purchaser, for the fellows of New College purchase and pay the monastery this quantity of wheat for more than a century, when they finally commute it for a money payment. But it seems

manifest that if the present possessor of an estate were able to charge it with all manner of dues and payments, he was doing that which this famous statute was seeking to prevent, and was creating interests out of a property which were dependent on himself, his heirs and successors.

More effectual than either of these statutes, and, as it appears, more necessary, was the statute directed against gifts in mortmain. Grants to religious houses were made void by the Great Charter, the plea, as before, being the loss of dues and services. But the Act of Edward inflicted a penalty on such transactions by introducing the interest of the Crown as a reversioner on such grants, when the giver or his heirs were indisposed to claim them, or the intermediate lord was negligent in setting up his right. But the devices by which the monastic orders strove to evade the Statutes of Mortmain, and the sleights by which they sought to cover their acquisitions, are well known to students of English law. As time went on, they contrived to get possession of charges, annuities, rents, and finally impropriations, where they were often out of the reach of any statutes.

As Edward has been called the English Justinian, so he is credited with being the author of the English House of Commons. The precedent had been set him by De Montfort, who seems to have wished to make the counties and towns, as well as his party among the nobles, accomplices in his designs. But I cannot imagine that Edward intended or foresaw that his Commons would take part in legislative action, then or thereafter. It is plain that the grants made to Henry were conceded by the nobles and prelates. It is certain that the taxes paid to Edward were contributed from valuations of all persons, their household goods, chattels, and corn in stock, serf as well as free, for the taxing rolls of Edward I. almost amount to a census of the families. It would appear, then, that the knights and burgesses were summoned to grant and distribute the tax, perhaps even to assess it. That they would inevitably, in time, criticize the occasion on which the tax was granted, that they would consider themselves entitled to withhold or refuse it, or burden it with conditions, any

statesman of the age might anticipate. But Edward, though he is constantly asking for taxes, constantly gets what he wants. There are several occasions on which Edward disregarded differences of tenure, and therefore of liability, and strove to bring all his subjects under the same liabilities. The right of the Commons to a place in Parliament, under the condition that enactments were not valid except with the consent of the Commons, was affirmed for the first time at York in 1322, when Edward's son was striving to restore the Despensers, who had been banished by the Peers the year before.

The principality of Wales had long acknowledged the feudal superiority of the English Crown; the kingdom of Scotland had done so periodically. Thus the suzerainty of England was admitted in the reign of Henry II., remitted in that of Richard. But I presume that Edward's claim, fruitful of so many miseries to both kingdoms, though it undoubtedly had a great influence in moulding the national character of the Scotch, was derived from the reputed claims of those early English princes of whom the Norman conquerors affected to be the rightful successors. It is probably for some reason of this kind that Edward is sometimes called Edward IV., and his son Edward V. The Lowland Scotch were more strongly Teutonic in their origin than the English themselves. Perhaps there is no English king who has been more variously depicted by his foes and by his subjects than Edward. With the one he is the greatest of the Plantagenets; with the other he is an implacable and ruthless tyrant, who trampled on the most sacred rights of nations and the most undoubted title of his pupil, his subject, and his rebel, for Robert Bruce was a Norman noble, who had been educated and promoted by Edward, who had solemnly pledged his allegiance to him, who was seduced by the prospect of a crown, and murdered one nearer in blood than himself to that crown, in order that he might, it appears, remove a rival out of the way.

The administrative and military abilities of Edward were plainly of a very high order. He was reputed to be studiously

true to his word, to have been conspicuous in his own age for his integrity and good faith, and to have exacted similar fidelity from all who were under obligations to him. Hence his confirmation of the charters, and his pledges to levy taxes only with his subjects' consent, were concessions from which he did not mean to swerve, but to honourably keep. His reign is therefore an epoch in English history on which constitutional antiquaries love to dwell, and in which politicians of later ages have thought they could detect the development of English institutions.

The most successful part of Edward's administration was his short and decisive struggle with the Church. The time was favourable to him, for Boniface, whose pretensions were as exalted as those of any among his predecessors at the beginning of the century, had contrived to quarrel with Philip IV. of France; and France has always been the most inconvenient foe which the Papacy has ever wrestled with. Deceived by the belief that Boniface could shelter them from Edward's authority, the English prelates seem to have determined to defy the king, perhaps to have obtained the very bull which forbade their obedience to his demands. The king put them out of his peace, that is, refused them the protection of the law, and excluded the bishops from Parliament. In the end they submitted, and granted the king his demands. But it is remarkable that this is the last occasion on which the clergy, as an order, resisted the authority of the Crown. In some particulars the occasion was favourable to them, for the quarrel with the bishops and clergy was simultaneous with the famous altercation of Edward with the two earls. But there appears to have been no party in the country which was willing to side with the Church, and it is only a pious belief that they had a notable part in the solemn confirmation of the charters.

The great reputation of Edward I. was followed by the scandals which marked the career of his foolish and disreputable son. Edward of Carnarvon was a person of considerable accomplishments, of graceful manners, and of genial temper. But from the first he roused to fury a party among his

nobles by his unseemly attachment to scandalous favourites. The gossip of the time affirmed that he was not the true son of the Hammer of the Scots, but that the real royal infant had been mutilated in his cradle by some animal, hog or dog, and that the nurse, fearing the king's displeasure at her carelessness, had substituted her own son. In just the same way, when his great-grandson, Richard II., became unpopular, a story was current that he was not the son of the Black Prince, but a supposititious or even adulterine child. Edward's reign was marked by unheard-of calamities. England suffered a famine to which there has not been before or since a parallel. To the disgust of the English people, his army was hopelessly defeated at Bannockburn, and all hope of recovering Scotland was lost. But, worst of all, the king was incurably attached to utterly hateful persons. Gaveston had been banished by the old king, and was instantly restored when death had removed the obstacle to Edward's affection for his favourite. He is again banished, and again restored; again driven into exile, again recalled, and finally murdered by the discontented lords. Edward vowed vengeance on his cousin, the ringleader of the party, and found the opportunity of satisfying his revenge nine years afterwards.

In the later years of the king's reign, the Despensers were the king's favourites, especially the younger. They excited the same animosity which had been roused by Gaveston, were banished, restored, and finally fell with their master. In the first attack on the Despensers, they were charged with usurping royal power. I find, in many accounts of the time, that they exercised the privilege of purveyance, *i.e.*, the compulsory purchase of agricultural products and merchants' goods, at fixed rates, paying for them by orders on the Exchequer ; and the accounts frequently mention that bribes were given them in order to escape their exactions. Purveyance was an ancient right of the Crown, but I do not find that it was generally abused. It was occasionally inconvenient for the bailiff or farmer to have his stock entirely cleared out, even when full market prices were given for what was taken, but the bailiff rarely, if ever, notes that his master's goods were seized by the royal

officers without payment, or for nominal sums. After the accession of the Stuarts, purveyance became a real grievance, for the Crown declared the contingent of live stock or provisions which a county should supply, fixed the price, often at one-third of the real value, and then called on the county to provide for the demand.

Edward was deposed on Jan. 7th, 1327, by the Lords and Commons in Parliament, after articles had been exhibited against him. Commissioners were sent from Westminster to Kenilworth, where he was, to inform him that his subjects had renounced their allegiance to him, and were no longer bound by their oaths. An oath of adherence to Isabella's quarrel was exacted from the nobles in Guildhall. Edward resigned, and his son was proclaimed. The Despensers, the king's favourites, were executed; the chancellor, Baldock, who had fled with the king, was thrown into prison; and Stapledon, Bishop of Exeter and Lord High Treasurer, was murdered by the London mob. This kind of violence shows that the people were irritated by fiscal oppression, for the public anger is directed against the officials of the Exchequer. The murder of Stapledon is a strong indication of the change which had come over the mind of Englishmen. It was an act of sacrilege, from which, a generation or two before, every one would have recoiled with horror. At the beginning of the next century, an archbishop was executed after judicial process; and fifty years after Scrope's death, two English bishops attached to the Court were murdered by infuriated mobs. In Edward's reign, too, the order of the Knights Templars was dissolved; and though these military ecclesiastics did not, in England, suffer the atrocious punishments which were inflicted on them in France, their possessions were confiscated, and a precedent given for dealing with the property of religious organizations.

The principal events of Edward the Third's reign are contained in his claim to the throne of France, and the great war of the French Succession, which continued, with interruptions of truce, from the Battle of Sluys to that of Chatillon. There were persons who believed, even in France, that

Edward's title was valid. Stated briefly, it was that he was the nearest male heir of Charles IV. Some historians, in commenting on the nature of Edward's claim, observe that Charles of Navarre was nearer in blood to the last king of the older stock; but this personage was not in existence when Edward's claim, whatever it was worth, accrued. The effect of this claim was a war which lasted, with intervals, for more than a hundred years, during which, at one time, the great province of Aquitaine, less, indeed, than the ancient dominions of Henry of Anjou, was annexed to the English crown by the Treaty of Bretigni; at another time, the succession in France was altered and transferred to Henry VI.

The English people were under the impression that the possession or acquisition of considerable transmarine dominions by the English king would lessen the burdens which the exigencies of the king's exchequer called upon them to bear. The more reasonable advocates of foreign empire pointed to the benefits which would accrue to trade by the possession of a country, the supplies of whose produce was a matter of high necessity to England, and whose people might be purchasers of English produce. In any case, it was of great military importance that the country should have for itself some means of entry into France. Thus Calais was conceived to be of the greatest value to England. It was garrisoned with extraordinary care. The charge of maintaining it was a heavy burden on the English exchequer. It was made the principal mart for English produce, or, in the phraseology of the time, the staple was fixed there. The custody of Calais was the highest office of trust which the king could confer on any subject. The acquisition of Boulogne by Henry VIII., in the latter part of his reign, was also conceived to be of supreme military significance. The loss of Calais was a sign, though not the cause, of the decline of English influence on the Continent. When Elizabeth succeeded, she affected to be anxious for its recovery. But this wise queen knew that the recovery of it would be a most serious burden on her finances, and that political strength does not always consist in the possession of strong

places. When, during the splendid career of Cromwell, Dunkirk was captured from the Spanish Netherlands, no part of the Protector's career, not even the capture of the Plate fleet, excited so much enthusiasm as the acquisition of this town on the French border. When, after the Restoration, Charles prudently, but meanly, sold it, at Clarendon's instigation, as was believed, to the King of France, the English public was excited to extreme wrath at the event, nicknamed Clarendon's new mansion Dunkirk House, pretended to believe that it was built out of the bribes given for the surrender of the town, and drove the owner into exile.

The wars of Edward took place at a time in which the spirit of ancient feudalism was breaking down, and a military system was supplanting it. Edward had taken advantage of the latter before France had rid itself of the former. Hence his armies, composed of selected men, taken from every class of the community where likely recruits could be found, were picked, drilled, and kept under discipline. Though they were numerically always inferior, the chivalry of France was scattered in confusion before them. They were taken to Spain, and the Spanish militia was easily routed at Navaretto. For generations they were the best troops in Europe. Sometimes a captain of the companies, when employment at the seat of war was scanty and pay was not to be had, migrated to Italy or Germany. Thus Sir John Hawkwood, one of Edward's captains, served the republic of Florence. These companies were the scourge of France, pillaging friend or foe indifferently. The French peasantry rose in insurrection against them, committed horrible atrocities on the chivalry which had oppressed them, and made havoc where they could. The combatants suspended their hostilities, made common cause against the peasants, and drove them back into even more abject misery.

The oppression of the French roturier dates from the evil days of the first war of the French Succession. The miseries of the Thirty Year's War in Germany were not, I believe, more terrible than the calamitous times of Philip of Valois, John, and Charles V. While the English yeoman was growing in

opulence and spirit, and even the English serf was attaining a legal tenancy, the French peasant was becoming more and more degraded, more hopelessly ground down between the two great millstones of the king and the aristocracy. In France, from the days of Philip Augustus to those of Louis XIV., the struggle was always between king and nobles, for the French king never had the wit to make the people his friends. At one time the great feudatories, Normandy, Toulouse, and Guienne, were striving after independence, and seeking to limit the kings of the House of Capet to the city and outskirts of Paris, as generations before the kings of the House of Charles the Great were confined to Laon and its suburbs. At another, a party of nobles is willing, for its own ends, to give the crown to a foreigner. The most sagacious act of Edward was to accept Aquitaine, which he could manage, in lieu of the throne of France, where, even if he had exterminated every pretender of the House of Valois, he would have had an incessant struggle with the turbulent chivalry of the kingdom. A generation or two later, and the crown of France is the prize which the Burgundians and Armagnacs were ready to offer to the claimant which would give them the best price for the splendid bauble, while either would make the acquisition intolerable to the king of their choice. The King of England, sometime King of France, is expelled, and the faction fight revives, under the grotesque name of the War of the Public Good, the most impudent fiction which a party has ever assumed. In the next century the conspiracy of the nobles against the sovereign is that of the Huguenots and the faction of the House of Guise. The genius and contempt of Henry curbs the factions for a time, and the traditions of his policy are inherited, though with far inferior sagacity, by Richelieu, who succeeded in discovering a *modus vivendi* with the Huguenots, while he strengthened the central authority. He and his wretched, selfish, callous master, Louis XIII., whose brother was even baser than he was, pass away, and again the ever-present conspiracy breaks out in the war of the Fronde. That the French have endured a monarch or a despot is intelligible, for he has been the

symbol of order and government. But I can well understand that a Frenchman who had the most superficial knowledge of his own country's history, or had even experienced a traditional instinct, should have loathed his aristocrats, and should have rent them, even when, as in 1789, they postured on behalf of the people's rights.

I know nothing in history which is sadder than the story of the French peasant. The picture which Michelet gives of him in his better days implies and contains the accumulated tragedy of generations. From century to century the gulf between him and the privileged classes grew deeper and deeper. He bore all the burdens of government, taxes in money, taxes in produce, taxes in blood, and was treated, as time went on, with increasing brutality and contempt. The France of the writer of memoirs and novels is the country of fine ladies and gentlemen, in which the mass of Frenchmen counts for absolutely nothing, except to be robbed and cudgelled. When the economists urged a reform in the laws which regulated husbandry and its products, they had nothing to say about the rights of the roturier, but dwelt on the supreme utility of his industry. But in England the case was very different. The yeoman and the noble were on the same level as regards the law and the Crown. The former was constantly being levelled up to the latter, till at last the incidents of the farmer's tenancy being found to be more convenient and less onerous than those of the military occupant, the estate of the noble and the knight was levelled down to that of the yeoman and the peasant. The picture which Fortescue in the fifteenth century gives of the English franklins and freeholders, and the contrast which he draws between their condition and the beggarly poverty of the French husbandman, where the civil law is supreme, and the kingdom is not "political," as he calls a constitutional monarchy,—borrowing the term from the politics of Aristotle, —but one which is absolute in theory and arbitrary in practice, shows that even at this time the difference between the husbandmen of the two nations was striking and appreciated.

The war of the French Succession inflicted excessive misery

on France and permanent degradation on her peasantry. But it also did England the mischief of creating that most dangerous of all classes,—the professional soldier. This inconvenience is not so manifest in the fourteenth as it was in the fifteenth century, when the hired partizans of the two factions literally destroyed each other, and England for a century became a despotism under parliamentary forms.

The constant want of money for his foreign campaigns made Edward more than ever dependent on his Parliaments. In course of time the chambers are separated, and sit apart. In course of time the function of granting taxes is left to the Commons, for as the king sat with his lords, the debate as to the king's necessities was best carried on in a chamber from which he was absent, and from which, as far as possible, the ministers of the Crown were excluded. At last the king himself consults his Commons on questions of public policy. Thus, in 1366, he put the question to them, what course of action they should recommend, in case the pope put his threat into execution of citing the king to Avignon, to make answer for default in the non-payment of the tribute granted by John for the realm of England and the lordship of Ireland; and in 1369, the Parliament is asked whether, in their opinion, the King of England should resume the title of King of France, *i.e.*, engage afresh in war at their expense. At the conclusion of the king's reign they revive or invent the process of Parliamentary impeachment, or, at least, energetic criticism in Parliament on the conduct of the king's ministers. The declining years of Edward were clouded by military reverses and domestic troubles. His eldest son, who had declared himself on the side of the popular discontents, predeceased him, leaving an heir only ten years old. His third son, John of Gaunt, the titular King of Castile, through whom the claims of Philip of Spain to the English throne were derived, was credited with ambitious aims, and with having proposed that the issue of females should be declared to be out of the royal succession.

The old king was succeeded by a child. The natural guardian of the realm during the king's minority was John

of Gaunt. But the custody of the king's person and the administration of affairs appears to have been left in the hands of his mother. The war in France languished; there were quarrels, becoming more and more bitter, among the members of the royal house; and the Duke of Gloucester took the position of a regular opposition to the king, which the Earl of Lancaster had taken in opposition to the king's great-grandfather. Already the precedent of that reign was talked about. As early as 1386, Richard was threatened with a sentence of deposition. In the same year the Commons proceed to the impeachment of an unpopular minister. In the next, the king's attempt to obtain a legal decision in favour of his prerogative, and the premature disclosure of his design, led to the uprising of the lords appellants. But the combination of the nobles was soon broken up, and Richard regained his authority. For some years he remained on terms of apparent amity with his former enemies, but nourished his animosity towards them with that patient dissimulation which is the only sign of persistent vigour in a man whose character is otherwise weak and uncertain. At last he found himself able to strike. Gloucester was arrested and murdered at Calais; Arundel was executed after trial; and the Archbishop of Canterbury was banished. Soon after this followed the banishment of Norfolk and Bolingbroke, the unlucky expedition to Ireland, the death of John of Gaunt, whose possessions the king unwisely and illegally confiscated, the return of Bolingbroke, the general uprising of the nation against Richard and his government, and the king's formal deposition.

The political troubles of Richard's reign were, I am convinced, greatly inflamed by the number of military adventurers whom the cessation of the French war had brought back to England. In the early years of Richard, we read that formidable bands of brigands had established themselves in various parts of England, especially in Lancashire and Cheshire, which were under a special jurisdiction, and that they committed incredible atrocities. The Commons explain the great insurrection of 1381, to which I shall hereafter refer

in detail, to the existence of these lawless bands, and to the impunity with which they committed their crimes. But they also complain of the grievance of purveyance, and the discontent which it caused among the peasantry. It is highly probable that during the non-age of the king, the principal servants of the Crown may have abused their power, and that the king's half-brothers, the Holands, may have committed the offences of which the Despensers were guilty. But I see also in these banditti, as well as in the rapidity with which the discontented nobles could collect an army, that there must have been a large body of persons in the country who had followed the profession of arms, who were ready to be enlisted by any one who could offer them pay, and quite prepared for acts of violence. Still we do not hear that the peasantry was plundered.

The long war with France, though from many notices in the rolls of Parliament it seems to have been certainly popular, was attended with great expense. The principal source from which supplies were derived was an assessment on the personal estate of every householder. When such a tax was granted in Parliament, assessors were appointed to value property and collect the proceeds. It is possible that the duty of this assessment and collection was originally imposed on the representatives who assented to the tax. If so, the practice was found inconvenient, for in the parliament of 1352, a grant by the Commons is made on the condition that no knight, citizen, or burgess of parliament should be a collector of the aid so granted. This limitation is frequently repeated on subsequent occasions.

Parliaments were held constantly during Edward the Third's reign for financial and legislative purposes. Even in the early part of it, a promise was made that Parliament should sit every year once, and even oftener, if necessary. From the time, too, in which Edward began to prosecute his claims, first in Scotland and next in France, he was constantly appealing to his subjects for assistance,—the counties, the towns, and the clergy. The general rule was that a fifteenth should be levied on the counties, a tenth on the cities and the boroughs and

the clergy. These fifteenths and tenths were granted at least eleven times during the reign, as well as seven other contributions designated as grants, or subsidies, or aids.

In 1339 and 1340, when the war was beginning, very great efforts were made. In the first year a tithe was given to the king of corn, fleeces, and lambs; and in the second, the grant of a ninth of each of these agricultural products was conceded for two years. On both occasions the "bondmen" of the lords were exempted from the charge. The inhabitants of towns were to pay an equivalent.

But the most novel and important financial expedients are those adopted in 1340, in addition to the tithe named above, in 1371 and in 1377. Each of these requires a short comment.

In the first of these years, the king having warned his parliament and the clergy three years before that he was about to enter on a most serious and costly war, besides the large grants in produce, which were of course redeemed at market rates, the Commons offer an aid of 30,000 sacks of wool, under certain conditions. In order to assist the king's credit, they pledge themselves in any case to guarantee 2,500 sacks, which they make a free gift to him. It is clear, then, that in the case of a grant like this, perhaps in the case of any grant, the king anticipated the revenue which he should receive by borrowing money on the security of future income. We know that he did this to a great extent, that two Florentine houses made considerable advances to him, and that they suffered great losses when, subsequently, he was unable to meet his engagements. There was, however, no grant which was of greater value for the purpose of negotiating commercial bills than wool, for it was always saleable, especially in Flanders, where the king at this time had amicable relations with the popular leaders.

It might be supposed that the grant of so large an amount of the staple produce of England at such a crisis, to be disposed of by a sudden sale, in case the payment were made in kind or redeemed at market rates, in the event of the obligation being met in such a manner, as it was from those who

were not sheep-masters, would have materially reduced the market value of the article. But no such result ensues; wool had indeed been cheap for some years past, about 25 per cent. below what had been the average for half a century; but immediately on the settlement of this financial operation, the price rose to nearly the old average, and remained comparatively high. The fact is, the monopoly of this produce was so absolute, and the necessity of procuring it was so urgent, that even so large a quantity as 30,000 sacks, which I conclude to have been nearly a tenth of the annual produce of the kingdom, though made the basis probably of a single or, at any rate, a concerted commercial transaction, was put on the market, or at least was known to be forthcoming, without the price of the article being adversely affected. As I have stated, the price immediately rose.

The average price of wool during the nine years 1349-47 was 3*s.* 6½*d.* the stone of fourteen pounds; while the average prices for the seventy years 1261-1330 was 4*s.* 8½*d.* Hence the sack of wool was worth at the time of the grant about 92*s.* This closely corresponds to the average of the values given to the different kinds of wool by Parliament in 1452, when the Commons petitioned that wool of the qualities named and priced in the schedule should not be exported at less than the price quoted, under a penalty of £40 the sack. In the year 1452, I find that the average value of wool was 3*s.* 4*d.* the stone, according to such sales as I have found, or 86*s.* 8*d.* the sack. The average of the Parliamentary schedule is 90*s.* 3*d.*

The Commons, or some commissioners appointed for the purpose, scheduled the several counties and four towns, London, Bristol, Newcastle, and York, omitting, as usual, Durham and Chester, the two counties palatine, which were not represented in Parliament, but were undoubtedly assessed and taxed by the proper authorities. The assessment is exceedingly minute, descending to quarters of pounds, and is undoubtedly, according to the lights of the time, an exact and equitable distribution of an exceptional tax proportionately to the reputed wealth of the several counties. I have

already commented by anticipation on this and similar assessments, when I was treating of the comparative opulence or poverty of the several English counties in the fourteenth century. For this purpose any value might have been assigned to the sack of wool, and I accordingly took 80*s.* as the market value of the unit, since it formed a convenient multiple, and, according to the practice constantly adopted by statisticians, I added a unit to the gross sum when the fraction was over half, and omitted all notice of it when it was less.

The quantity of wool assessed over the thirty-seven counties and four towns is a good deal less than the grant. It amounts to 20,376 sacks, and, at 80*s.* the sack, it is valued at £81,504. It is quite possible that the king accepted a less amount than the Commons offered in their burst of enthusiasm after the great naval victory of Sluys, as more than a century later Henry VI., or his advisers, accepted a less grant than his Commons were willing to give him after the revolt of Guienne. But it will be seen that, taking the actual price of wool at the time, the grant amounted in money value to £138,000, an enormous sum, and far in excess of any similar grant, for the subsidy of a fifteenth and tenth on the property of laymen amounted to about £38,176; and this, as the war went on, was conceived a reasonable annual contribution to its expenses.

It does not follow that the tax was paid in kind. In the case of the towns it is improbable that it should have been; and as the grant of the tax is unaccompanied by an equivalent contribution from the districts where, as Parliament says on other occasions, corn and sheep are not found, the payment in kind could have been no possible convenience to the king, and would have been a very great inconvenience to the burgesses. In accordance with such an hypothesis I find that the fellows of Merton College paid on their Cambridge and Chesterton property certain sums in two instalments—on the former of 40*s.*, on the latter of 5*s.*—as their contribution to the great wool tax of 1340-1. It is plain that these were not only money payments, but assessments in money.

In 1346, the king claimed the aid which was payable out of

every knight's fee on the occasion of his eldest son being made a knight. He demanded 40*s.*; but the Commons answered that by the Statute of Westminster the first, this aid had been fixed at 20*s.* Such a sum was, I find, actually paid from two of the Merton College estates on this ground. But at another of these estates the quarter of a knight's fee pays 10*s.* It is noteworthy that an aid for knighting the king's eldest son was not paid again by the military tenants of the Crown till 1503, when Henry VII. demanded it on behalf of Arthur, who had actually died three years before. If, as was stated commonly,—for instance, in Wynkyn de Worde's "Chronicle of England," printed in 1489,—the knights' fees in England were 75,000, of which the "men of religion" had 27,015, the receipts from this aid were a very notable sum. But numbers are habitually exaggerated in these estimates. The next tax on which I shall comment is a well-known instance of the untrustworthiness of early statistical calculations.

In 1371, the Commons give the king a round sum of £50,000 in an assessment of an average of 22*s.* 3*d.* on each parish in England. This estimated the number of English parishes at nearly 44,950. But it was speedily found that the number of parishes had been absurdly miscalculated, and they at once amended their grant by assessing the parishes at an average of 106*s.*, which gives about 9,434 as the real number. This is probably accurate. I find several entries of taxes to a large amount paid during this year; but as the clergy gave an equal sum of £50,000 from their revenues, and two, at least, of the payments are from impropriate tithe, and a third maybe, the amount is from too uncertain a source to be suggestive. The payment from a fourth is undoubtedly from a lay holding, and is twenty-five per cent. above the amount ordinarily paid on account of a subsidy.

The third of these financial expedients is the poll-tax of 1377. It was 4*d.* on all persons of both sexes over fourteen years of age, mere mendicants excepted; a shilling on all beneficed clergy; and 4*d.* on all non-beneficed clergy. I have already referred to this tax, as it gives information about the amount of the population in England, and supplies other

valuable statistics for the fourteenth century. The tax, if we can rely on the numbers, must have brought in a little less than £24,000; but its unfairness could hardly fail of being irritating. Even when the poll-tax was graduated in the next reign, it became the immediate, though not the real, cause of Tyler's insurrection. Probably, however, the Commons were at their wits' end for expedients, and a tax which was suggested by the charge for enrolling names on the manor record, and which treated the whole of the king's subjects as the members of a vast manor, appeared obvious and natural. The threefold payment made by the beneficed clergy accords with the view which, as we have seen, generally prevailed, that the proportion contributed by them ought to be larger than that of the laity.

It may be convenient at this point to say a little about the incidence of taxation, and the proportion which it bore to income. I have never, as my reader will anticipate, found an unbroken series of accounts from any manor or parish. There are gaps in them all, even though care was originally taken for their preservation. The wonder is rather that so many have survived in muniment rooms, when all interest in their existence had passed away, and they were often thrown in heaps on damp stone or tiled floors. Thus for the fifty years of Edward the Third's reign, of the annual rolls of one estate, constantly cultivated by its owners, up to the last year of Edward's reign, twenty-nine alone survive; and in nineteen of these years, the estate pays a fifteenth to the king, in one the tax twice over, the impost of two years having been probably collected in one. It is probable also that in not a few cases the lord paid the tax to the collector at his own audit when he was in receipt of money.

On one particular estate, the farming profits of which I have exactly estimated, and which amount to about £30 a year, the amount of a fifteenth imposed by Parliament is, on an average of three years, about 30*s.*, or five per cent.; and this I should conclude was the ordinary incidence of a fourteenth century subsidy. The wool tax, however, if it had been paid in full and assessed proportionately, would have been between three

and four times the amount of the ordinary subsidy, or about 18 per cent. of the annual profits of the estate. And this I find is nearly verified by the amount of taxation paid on other properties. A fifteenth on an estate at Cambridge is 10*s.*; the wool tax, as I stated above, is 40*s.*

The rolls of Parliament, from which we derive all our knowledge of public business from the thirteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century, are far from perfect. Many of the records have been lost. When the journals of the two Houses began with the reign of Henry VIII., that of the Lords, though the early years exist, has large gaps in its continuity, while that of the Commons is lost for Henry's reign, the record commencing with the reign of Edward VI. In consequence, my accounts, though I did not record the payment of taxes on any but the Merton College properties and one or two besides, give me many more taxes than the rolls of Parliament grant to the king. There are only eight out of the fifty years of Edward's reign in which one or the other of these estates is not represented as paying the king a tenth or fifteenth as a tax or a subsidy. The estate at Leatherhead, which pays nineteen taxes in the twenty-nine years for which its accounts are preserved, had about 160 acres under the plough, earned about the same profit, some £30 a year, from its agricultural operations, and pays about five per cent. on its profits when it contributes to a subsidy. After the Great Plague, its payments drop to half their original amount. The same shrinkage of taxable property is observed in other estates, and it is therefore possible that the amount of a subsidy in the later years of Edward is considerably less than the amount which was collected before that great social convulsion occurred. At any rate, if the wool tax of 1340-1 represented a charge of 18 per cent. on the annual profits of labour and capital, the net income of the English people at the time was probably about £766,600 a year, or a little over 6*s.* a head, to be saved by labour, or appropriated by the non-producing classes.

The taxes paid to the king were by no means the whole of the charges which were imposed upon the fourteenth century Englishman. The pope and his minions, the car-

dinals, the archbishop, the bishop, and the archdeacon levy their charges, generally in the form of a percentage on receipts. The amount varies considerably. It is sometimes as much as two-and-a-half per cent. on the taxpayer's income, in this case the recipient of an ecclesiastical revenue, sometimes at no more than a halfpenny in the mark. The payments to the pope are most noticeable during the weak reign of Edward II., who, we are informed, paid John's tribute regularly. Thus on one estate in Cambridgeshire a payment is made to the pope in 1314 for six years, *i.e.*, for the whole period during which Edward had been reigning. These taxes to foreign ecclesiastics became rarer during Edward the Third's reign, but do not disappear. I find them up to the close of his reign.

Sometimes the estate pays a regular tax, quite distinct from those which are levied by authority of Parliament. Thus one pays a fixed sum under the head of foreign service, another a tax called the king's gabelle. In each case the amount is precisely, or almost precisely, the half of the ordinary fifteenth. I find no record in the rolls of Parliament of a tax of the twentieth sack of wool given in 1347, amounting to nearly three times the ordinary fifteenth, and paid in several places. So sometimes a locality is charged with the maintenance of soldiers, to repel an invasion or raid of the Scotch; or a levy is made upon inland counties for the "ward of the sea," the precedent for Noy's ship money. Similar to these are a contribution made by a Cambridgeshire parish for the burial of the dead in Scotland in 1321, the year in which Edward made his second foolish expedition into that kingdom. But these charges are exceptional and rare.

When the Parliament became a regular institution, and the Convocations of the two provinces were summoned and duly warned of the obligation that they must meet, to discuss the king's necessities and supply the requisite means for the defence of the kingdom and the maintenance of the king's estate and rights, the parties represented were bound to pay wages to the knights, citizens, and burgesses who appeared for the laity, and the proctors who appeared for the Convocation

of the clergy. The prelates were in both assemblies, in a double capacity and under a double duty, as lords of parliament and peers. They held by barony, and were liable to the ordinary obligations of the Crown's vassals. As the recipients of incomes derived from estates in free alms or other benefices, they were of the clergy, and made their grants for such estates in Convocation. It seems that for this reason a distinction is constantly drawn between two kinds of clerical estates, or rather estates held by clergymen. Some of these are said to be amortized at or after a given date; some to have been in the hands of these dignitaries from time immemorial. It was an object with the ecclesiastics to escape what might be, perhaps was, a double risk. The Abbot of Osney, in Oxford, and the Abbot of Thorney, in Cambridgeshire, constantly claim to be relieved of attendance at secular assemblies. They sometimes succeed in proving a license of exemption; but it is clear that there is an adviser of the Crown, who counsels the permanent officials that this is a disputable shift, and that the abbots must come to parliament, all objections notwithstanding. In point of fact, absence from parliament is a sign of disaffection among the lay lords and of evasion among the spiritual peers; and just as absentees were treated with considerable severity if they were nobles, and with very significant threats, even of confiscation, if they were ecclesiastical dignitaries, so it is clear that the Government was clearly alive to the wisdom of compelling an appearance and of submission to the general rule.

The payment made to the proctor in Convocation is generally a rate. The ordinary amount is a halfpenny per mark of income; and probably if these payments, in which a sum is given, could be referred to known quantities, it would be found that the basis of the payment was always a fixed amount. In the case of lay representation, the amount could not be anticipated in this way.

The Member of Parliament had daily wages; the knights or county members receiving more—the amount is not invariable—than the burgesses. When the Parliament was prorogued or dismissed (it is premature to use the

word dissolved), the writs for payment were made out, and the time during which the House sat was exactly calculated. Now it is plain that the charge put by representation on a small town was a far more onerous burden on the inhabitants than that imposed on a county. Hence the burgesses were frequently dismissed, in the early days of Parliament, long before the knights were, though we may, I think, conclude that the former would be held to their attendance if duties common to town and county were before parliament. To many of the towns representation was a formidable burden, was most unwillingly borne, and was gladly evaded. Even in the counties there was a struggle, which lasted for a century, and which the Crown always refused to decide at the instance of the Commons, under which the old tenants of the Crown, those in ancient demesne, were relieved from contribution to the wages of the knights of the shire, though these tenants had long been taxed by the same Act and on the same principle as other people had. But with the towns the cost was always grudged. Even in the opulent city of Norwich the expense was serious. The cost of representation is a considerable item in the municipal accounts.

If I am correct in my conclusion that the direct taxation of the fourteenth century, though frequent, and during the war almost annual in its imposition, was not more than five per cent. on the net profits of agriculture, and probably less on manufactures and trade, one cannot but be struck at the discontent and impatience with which the appeals to Parliament are received. The Commons plead that they are impoverished and wasted by incessant subsidies; that the country cannot bear the charges which the Government seeks to impose on it; and that the patience of the people is taxed beyond endurance. Part of these complaints are, no doubt, the real expression of those who found they had but a very narrow margin of receipts over expenditure, and felt the urgency of any drain. But most of this dissatisfaction is due to the form which taxation took—the ransom, namely, of one's chattels from an inquisitive and rapacious inquiry. Our forefathers, too, were under the impression that, except on

rare occasions, when it was certainly the duty of the subject to aid his king, the king could live, and ought to live, on his hereditary revenue, ample if properly husbanded, and constantly receiving accretions from well-known and obvious sources. The prince, they argued, has a vast estate. If he is so weak and lavish that his wealth, which he possesses in order that his subjects may not be harassed by exactions, is wasted on favourites, it is intolerable that his people should be the victims of his or their waste. His household should be ordained, his expenditure controlled, his grants resumed, his favourites banished. So before the deposition of Edward and Richard, attempts were made to reduce the royal expenditure by an interference in the king's private affairs and by the sumptuary regulations of his palace. Above all things, the Englishman of the middle ages disliked any indefinite risk in his liabilities. Hence in Edward's time the amount which was to be paid in a subsidy was finally fixed, and grants were made on condition that there should be no alteration whatever in the assessment. The grant once conceded, the locality distributed the charge over those who were liable to it. This ancient and continuous precedent was followed in the last of these grants, the land-tax of the Revolution, which has remained on the assessment of 1692.

It is always difficult to raise a revenue from direct taxation in a country where industry is mainly agricultural. The financier of the middle ages had no other resource, besides land and goods, on which to lay his charges. Even if the scanty consumption of foreign articles could have borne any check beyond the trifling import duties which were imposed on it, the charge of collecting the customs would have exhausted, perhaps have exceeded, the receipts. Besides, the customs duties were virtually an octroi on the larger towns. The south and east of England are full of creeks into which the light vessels of the time could easily run and discharge a cargo without risk of detection. After the Union of England and Scotland was effected, it was necessary to put the northern kingdom under the English revenue laws,

for otherwise Scotland would have a free port for smugglers But for nearly a century the receipts of the Scotch custom houses, according to Macpherson, were quite insufficient to satisfy the charges incurred in collecting the duties on imports. It is probable that with a view to the king's revenue, particular towns were designated as staple ports for various products, and the sale of such products to the foreign exporter was forbidden in any other locality. In the fourteenth century the English financier had not yet learned how important and elastic a source of revenue was the export duty on wool.

Constant attempts were made to obtain a release from the payment of direct taxation by petition to the Crown. In the year 1347, the warden and fellows of Merton College, Oxford, prayed the king that their land should be relieved from all tallages, fifteenths, and prises, and every other charge beyond the tithes of their churches, and that they might hold all their possessions in free alms. On this the king, by his son Lionel, the Warden of England, directs that an inquisition should be held by the escheator of the county of Oxford, and a return made of all the lands and tenements which they possess in the county, a similar inquiry being directed, no doubt, to the proper official in other counties where they held possessions. The inquiry was also to include information as to the injury which the king or others would receive if the prayer of the petitioners were granted. There is indirect evidence that the inquiry was duly held, and direct proof that the application was unsuccessful, for the College after this time pays these taxes to the Crown on its Oxford property from which it prayed to be relieved.

Later on it became a common custom to insert exemptions in Parliamentary grants. Thus the Colleges of Eton and Winchester and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge are frequently, and at last regularly, excused from taxation. The same favour is shown to certain towns whose, revenues had diminished, or which had otherwise become impoverished.

In some cases payments of money are made to the assessors

which are obviously bribes to secure a favourable valuation. The knowledge that this risk was always run, perhaps an occasional detection of the culprits, would have materially aided the demand that the assessment of the fifteenth should be a fixed and invariable quantity, and should be distributed, though not collected, by those who made the grant and earned the wages of a public service.

CHAPTER VIII.

THF FAMINE AND THE PLAGUE.

Dear Years—Famine in England—Causes of the Famine—Effects of the Famine of 1315-16—Commutation of Labour Rents—The Beginning of the Black Death—Its Appearance and Progress in Europe, and in England—The Loss of Life—The Memories of the Plague—Persecution of the Jews—Recovery of the Population—Effects of the Plague—Attempts of the Legislature and King—The Statute of Labourers—Obedience to the Statute impossible—Exaltation of Wages and Effects on Agricultural Profit illustrated by Facts—The Actual Rise in Agricultural Wages, General and in Harvest Work, Threshing, Reaping, Mowing, Thatching—The Rise in Artizans' Wages—The Effect on Prices of Agricultural and other Products—Position of the Capitalist Landowner—Position of the Tenant Farmer, of the Peasant Labourer.

THE average price of a quarter of wheat for the 280 years, 1261-1540, is 5*s.* 11¼*d.* During this long period there were years of exceptional plenty and of exceptional scarcity, the range being from 2*s.* 10½*d.*, the average of the year 1287, the lowest, and 16*s.* in 1316, the highest recorded. The latter year is, however, one of famine. In 1315, the average was about 1*s.* 2*d.* lower. In 1438, the price was 14*s.* 7½*d.* In 1527, it is nearly 13*s.* On two other occasions it nearly reaches 12*s.* On four occasions it is a little over 10*s.* Four shillings, according to Walter de Henley, was a price below remuneration, unless the crop was more than six bushels to the acre. In ordinary years, the price varies between 4*s.* 6*d.* and 6*s.* 6*d.* There are, of course, prices paid which are greatly above the highest average, and others which are a great deal below the lowest. The highest price which I have found during the whole period is a sale on May 30th, 1316, at Leatherhead, where two quarters are sold at 26*s.* 8*d.* If there be any scarcity, the market is always at

its highest in May, because the stock of the past harvest is falling low, and the prospects of the next are uncertain. In this case, the harvest of 1315 was found after Christmas to have been exceedingly deficient. That of 1316 was as bad, so low that the scarcity was hardly lightened during any part of the period between harvest and harvest. The highest quotation of wheat in modern English history was in March 1801, when it was returned at 156*s.* 2*d.* This, however, is not much more than double the customary price of the time. In the two years 1315-16, the average was nearly three times, and on the occasion quoted above, five times, the ordinary price.

I do not think, however, that the climate of England from the forty-fifth year of Henry III. to the thirty-first of Henry VIII., 280 years in all, could be treated as extraordinarily capricious or treacherous, since in only ten of the years did the price of wheat nearly reach or exceed double the average, the two greatest scarcities of 1316 and 1438 being separated by an interval of 122 years, and the third, that of 1527, occurring after an interval of eighty-nine years. It may be stated, too, that when the harvest is bad, it is always worst on a belt which lies between the Thames and the Wash, and includes the Midland and Eastern Counties. Hence the whole of the country is seldom similarly affected, South Wales and the southern promontory of Cornwall and Devon being generally more favoured when bad harvests afflict the Midland and Eastern Counties. This is even seen at the commencement of the great famine of 1315-16, for during the first year, the Welsh and extreme West were not so seriously injured. In the second year, the ruin is universal. As may be expected, corn is generally cheapest in the early winter, dearest in the early summer, even when the price is at an average, unless the previous year has been one of comparative scarcity, when the purchase of seed always affects the average. If the prospects of the coming year are of abundance, the rise in May and June is very slight, and hardly appreciable. There is, I think, reason to conclude, on looking at the course of the wheat markets, that information as to the aggregate crop was very

widely diffused, and that corn was sent to very considerable distances for sale. There were horses and carts in plenty, the rate of carriage was low, and the bailiff could easily reach a market where there was a demand. Beyond question, the surplus produce of country places was taken to the nearest towns, and sometimes to those which were at a distance.

The cause of bad harvests is always excessive rain. In the years 1315-16, we are told that the wet was incessant, and much of the corn never ripened. Contemporary writers tell us that the poorer classes were constrained to live on unwholesome or disgusting food, and that numbers of them perished from famine. An attempt was made to procure corn from the Continent, and ordinances were published fixing maximum prices—of course without avail, and prohibiting the consumption of beer, as was done in 1800 with the distilleries. To add to the distress, a pestilential murrain broke out among the cattle, and the bailiffs' rolls bear testimony to the universality of the disease, and the magnitude of the losses. It is said by chroniclers, that in the universal scarcity, numbers of servants and domestics were discharged; that, made desperate, these people became banditti; and that the country folk were constrained to associate themselves in arms, in order to check the depredations of those starving outlaws.

That the famines of this unfortunate period led to a considerable loss of life is proved by the unquestionable rise in the rate of agricultural wages after their occurrence. This is visible in the payments made for threshing corn, and still more markedly in those for reaping, where the rise is fully a penny an acre, the exaltation in the rates for oats and rye, previously the lowest paid, being the most considerable. The same rise is seen in payments for mowing, for thatching, and for women's labour. Now it is generally the case that, unless the labourer is paid at a rate which leaves him no margin over his necessary subsistence, an increase in the price of his food is not followed by an increase in the rate of wages, this result being arrived at only when there is a scarcity of hands. We shall see, when we come to deal with the wages of the sixteenth century, how

slight was the rise in their amount compared with that of other values. Now the exigencies of the weather put certain opportunities within the reach of the labourers which, as their numbers had now become scantier, they could easily use. The immediate rise in the wages of labour after the famine of Edward the Second's reign is as much as from 23 to 30 per cent., and a considerable amount of this becomes a permanent charge on the costs of agriculture. That part which is permanent amounts to 20 per cent. on an average.

The habit of cutting corn high up on the straw, and therefore of avoiding weeds, must have materially shortened the drying process, and subsequently that of threshing out the grain. Hence I conclude, if the corn only ripened, the mere presence of rain was not so injurious as it came to be, when, at a later period, the corn was cut low with the weeds. That this change took place is proved by the statement of Fitzherbert, who advises that corn used for home consumption should not be screened too carefully, as the seeds of many weeds in corn supply a notable quantity of meal which might well be saved for flour. In Arthur Young's times, it is again clear that wheat was cut high on the stalk.

During the reign of Edward II., the practice became increasingly general to accept money compensations in lieu of labour rents, and by the end of the first quarter of the century the rule had become almost universal. It was to the interest of both parties that these commutations should be effected. It was a vexation to the tenant that he should be called away from the work of his own holding to do the lord's labour. It is plain, from Walter de Henley's statement, quoted above, that the bailiff had no little trouble in getting the due quota of work from the tenant, some three roods of first ploughing a day, or an acre of second stirring. Hence, if the lord could get a fair money compensation for the labour, he could spare the cost of the bailiff's supervision over unwilling labourers. And as money was more useful than the work he got, as well as perhaps more profitable in the end, he would be induced to make liberal terms with his tenants in villeinage, even if he were not morally constrained to take the alterna-

tive in money, which was prescribed as an alternative in case the labourer, for any cause, made default in the field. At the same time he could, unless he made a special bargain, save the allowances which he made of bread and beer, and the license of every day taking as large a sheaf as the serf could lift on his sickle from the corn crops. These commutations would be entered on the manor rental, and would tend to assimilate the tenure of the serf, now increasingly called a tenant by copy or custom, with that of the freeholder who sat at a fee farm rent, besides familiarising all parties with the redemption of those contingencies which affected the status of a serf. Ultimately the money payments would be deemed to be fixed and determinate liabilities, the satisfaction of which was a discharge of all the old labour rents, and the proffer of which was a tender which the steward was bound to accept. I do not mean to say that the change was invariable, for there is evidence that the monasteries clung to the old system longer than lay lords did, and it is alleged that, while the regular clergy urged on these lords the expediency and humanity of enfranchising their serfs, they failed to practise in their own persons the moderation which they commended to their patrons and their penitents.

The period which intervened between the last of three bad harvests and the great event to which I shall next advert was one of exceptional prosperity. The harvests were generally abundant, the wages of labour had been permanently improved, and all kinds of produce were cheap. The early days of the great war did not impair the general well-being of the English people. The supremacy of England on the sea was assured, and the famous battle of Crecy was fought, less considerable in its immediate consequences than in the exalted reputation which it conferred on English arms. But this country, and all Europe with it, was on the verge of a great calamity, the most extensive in its immediate incidence, and the most significant in its ultimate effects, of all events which have happened in the history of this country, and, indeed, of all Europe.

The Black Death is alleged to have had its origin in the

centre of China, in or about the year 1333, and is reported to have been accompanied by various phenomena in the earth and atmosphere of a very novel and destructive character, such, indeed, as were noticed as long ago as in the plagues of Athens and the simultaneous visitations at Rome, or the mortality which prevailed in northern Europe near three centuries before our era, and at the terrible pestilence which visited the known world in the age of Justinian. So in later times the cholera and the influenza were traced to particular spots in India or China, which had been desolated by earthquakes, as Justinian's plague was said to have had its origin at Pelusium. Nearly every infectious or contagious disease which has desolated mankind appears to have had its origin in the farthest East, and to have travelled along thence to Europe, though the yellow fever is said to be a product of the West. It is alleged, that before it reached the West, the Black Death exhausted itself in the place of its origin. Like most other plagues, it was infinitely more destructive at the commencement of its career than after it had endured for a time. This is not to be accounted for by the fact that the weakest members of the community naturally succumbed the first, for we are told that it killed the strong, and that, just as with the Asiatic cholera, when it is most virulent, many of those attacked perished speedily, and before the disease had developed its most characteristic symptoms. It appears, indeed, and the impression is confirmed by scientific research, that when some new infection or contagion is developed, the whole population is specially liable to the assaults of the disease, and that sometimes it may totally perish, as in all likelihood the ancient occupants of the ruined cities in Central America have disappeared without leaving any sign, other than their stupendous buildings, of their existence. So also diseases familiar to us in England, and now become mild, are specially deadly to those races into which they have been for the first time introduced. In course of time, either the original virus of the disease is weakened, or those who are most susceptible of it are removed by death, or remedial measures are discovered which check or extinguish it. For

more than three centuries the plague wasted England, though at no time, it seems, so seriously as at its first and last visitations.

The Black Death, as our forefathers called it, from the dark purple blotches which appeared on the skin, when the blood and tissues had become wholly disorganized through the virulence of the disorder, still lingers in the East, under the name of the Levant, or Oriental, plague. Even now we are occasionally informed of some outbreak in an Eastern plague spot, where the hateful Turk has reduced every one to squalid poverty and misery, and whence Europe is again threatened. But the progress of sanitary science has probably put an end to the worst ravages of a disease which was so terrible more than five centuries ago. In England it does not seem to have been assisted by any prevalent distress among the people, as the Athenian plague was by overcrowding, as that of Cadiz was in 1800, or as the last visitation of small-pox was by the miseries of the Franco-German war. The period just before the plague was one of prosperity and abundance; and though our forefathers were immeasurably unclean in their habits and surroundings, and remained unclean for centuries afterwards, the best conditions of life do not appear to have given an immunity from the plague. Among the victims of the first year were one of Edward's daughters and three Archbishops of Canterbury. So the narrative given us by Boccacio proves that all classes were equally affected, for the ladies and gentlemen who retire in the Decameron to tell each other stories in a country house on the road to Fiesole had all of them lost relations by the plague. The Black Death visited Christ Church, Canterbury, very lightly, for a century before the prior had laid on pure water from the hills to the monastery.

The Black Death first attacked Europe in Cyprus at about the end of the year 1347, and was accompanied by great convulsions of the earth, and by atmospheric disturbances. Many persons who were seized with the disorder died instantly. The plague seemed not only to the frightened imagination of the people, but even to the more sober

observation of such men of science as lived at the time, to be moving forward with slow progress from the desolated East, under the form of a dark and fœtid mist, which settled on the garden of the Lord, and left it a howling wilderness. On January 25th, 1348, an earthquake had laid waste great part of the peninsulas of Italy and Greece. Meanwhile the mischief was steadily progressing along the basin of the Mediterranean, for the caravan traffic was carrying it everywhere, as the pilgrimages to and from Mecca disseminate disease in the homes and cities of returning devotees. The Black Death appeared at Avignon in January 1348, was in Florence by the middle of April, and had thoroughly penetrated France and Germany by August. It entered Poland in 1349, reached Sweden in the winter of the same year, and Norway, by infection from England, at about the same time. It spread even to Iceland and Greenland,—the former, a well-wooded country and fairly flourishing colony of Norse origin; the latter a region with which communications had been kept up for centuries. We are told that, among the physical changes which ensued from the Black Death, or preceded and aided it, vast icebergs were formed on the eastern side of Iceland and on the whole coast of Greenland, and effectually cut off all communication between the Old World and those parts of the New which heretofore had been familiarly visited. In 1351 it reached Russia, after having inflicted its first severities on the rest of Europe, and having taken the circuit of the Mediterranean. It is probable that the caravan trade through Russia had been at this time suspended, and that the natural spread of the disease had been checked by the barrier of the Caucasus.

On the 1st of August, 1348, the disease made its appearance in the seaport towns of Dorsetshire, and travelled slowly westwards and northwards, through Devon and Somerset, to Bristol. In order to arrest the progress of the mortality, the authorities of Gloucestershire prohibited all intercourse with the citizens of Bristol. It was in vain; the plague spread to Oxford, where it was terribly destructive, and travelling slowly in the same measured way, reached London by the

1st of November. It appeared in Norwich on the 1st of January, and thence spread northwards. Later in the year 1349, the Scotch made one of their customary raids into England, and, as they ravaged the north, invented an oath, "By the foul death of the English." On their retreat they were attacked by the pestilence in the forest of Selkirk, and the northern part of the island suffered as seriously as the more populous south.

The mortality was no doubt enormous and appalling. It is probable that one-third of the population perished. To be sure, panic always exaggerates numbers. One chronicler says that nine out of ten died. Similar amplifications, which have been heedlessly accepted by writers who are inexperienced in possibilities, are found in all the chroniclers. We are told that sixty thousand persons perished in Norwich between January and July, 1349. Norwich was probably the second city in the kingdom at the time, and Norfolk was certainly the richest county; but the number is twice as much as the population of both city and county at the time. Joshua Barnes, the author of a diffuse life of Edward III., pretends to give exact information as to the persons who died in the principal English cities. His numbers are undoubtedly untrustworthy. The nearest estimate to likelihood which I have seen is that of Knighton. He was a canon of Leicester, and lived a short time after the events. He tells us that the deaths in the three parishes of Leicester town were 1480. Even this number I believe to be exaggerated, for there is reason to conclude that at this time the population of Leicester was under 3,500.

Every town had its plague-pit. That of London was a spot afterwards occupied by the Charterhouse, and purchased for the purpose of sepulture by Sir Walter Manny, one of Edward's captains. Some years ago, being at Cambridge while the foundations of the new Divinity School were being laid, I saw that the ground was full of skeletons, thrown in without any attempt at order, and I divined that this must have been a Cambridge plague-pit. I have no doubt that the principal place of burial for the

Oxford victims was at some part of New College garden, for when Wykeham bought the site, it appears to have been one which had been previously populous, but was deserted some thirty years before during the plague, and apparently made a burial-ground by the survivors of the calamity. Hecker estimates the loss of population in Europe at twenty-five millions, a moderate and probable calculation.

No doubt the ravages of the pestilence were more general among the poorer classes. But, as I have already stated, the more opulent were not unaffected by it. The disease made havoc among the secular and regular clergy, and we are told that a notable decline of learning and morals was thence-forward observed among the clergy, many persons of mean acquirements and low character stepping into the vacant benefices. Even now the cloister of Westminster Abbey is said to contain a monument in the great flat stone, which we are told was laid over the remains of the many monks who perished in the great death. The novelist Boccacio dwells on the effect which the mortality caused in the character of the survivors, and how panic or despair made men callous, reckless, superstitious, heartless, cruel, and licentious; and Sismondi, in his great history of the French people, and of the Italian Republics, has collected contemporaneous evidence to the same effect.

The Black Death formed an epoch, and, for many years afterwards, facts were computed according to their nearness from the great pestilence. A century after the event, Gascoigne makes it the era of the new departure in Oxford, after which learning, morality, and the adequate discharge of duties began to wane; the universities were, relatively speaking, deserted, and the whole spirit of society was changed. It is said by Sir Harris Nicolas that of the three years, 1349, 1361, and 1369, in which note was made of the extraordinary virulence of a disease now become sporadic, the first pestilence was said to have lasted four months; the second through the winter, for eight months and nineteen days; the third for nearly three months. These dates of duration, given centuries after the event, cannot be accepted as authentic, but they are indirect testimony of the

singular impression which the calamity left on the mind of England. I have been struck with the fact, from more trustworthy sources, when I have noted certain entries made in the records of several Hertfordshire manors, where the plague appears to have been specially deadly. In these manors it was the practice for thirty years to head the schedule of expenditure with an enumeration of the lives which were lost and the tenancies which were vacated after the great death of 1348. Nor have I any doubt, if some antiquary were to have the patience to peruse and tabulate the taxing rolls of Edward I., and compare the names of residents in the several manors with the entries of tax-paying inhabitants resident in the same manors after the great plague, he would find that thousands of names perish from the manor registers, as that of the Oldmans did from Cuxham. It may be noted that the foundation of colleges in Oxford, which was rapidly proceeding before this stupendous event, ceased for many years, when it was taken up with renewed vigour.

At first, as is constantly the case in times of panic, there was a suspicion that the disease was the work of human agencies. As usual, the Jews were credited with having contrived the calamity. They were charged with poisoning the wells, and throughout France, Switzerland, and Germany, thousands of these unhappy people were destroyed on evidence derived from confessions obtained under torture, or even from the fact of their religion and origin. They were protected as far as possible by the Emperor, Charles IV., whose own influence in Germany was very circumscribed. They escaped persecution, too, in the dominions of Albrecht of Austria. It is said that the large Jewish population of Poland is due to the fact that Casimir the Great was induced, by the entreaties of Esther, a favourite Jewish mistress, to give them harbour and shelter in his kingdom. The story is curiously corroborated by the respect which is still paid by the Podolian Jews at the present time to the memory of this second Esther, who, being taken into the harem of another king, also alien to the race of Israel, remembered her kindred in the day of their trouble, and to the generosity of the Polish

monarch who yielded to her wish. It ought to be added that Clement VI. forbad the persecution of the Jews at Avignon, where the pope was still residing. The English people was saved from being tempted to the crime of murdering the Jews, because the king's grandfather had expelled the whole race from England. And yet, in this our own day, one sometimes wonders whether we have really escaped from the contingency, even in countries calling themselves civilised, of witnessing again the bigotry, the malignity, the spirit of hatred which accepts impossible lies, for which there was the excuse of ignorance in the middle ages, but not the shadow of an excuse now.

We learn from contemporary accounts, and here we can trust them, that a rapid growth of population followed on the destruction of the Black Death. It is said that after this event, double and triple births were frequent; that marriages were singularly fertile; and that, in a short time, the void made by the pestilence was no longer visible. The repressive check of a high standard of living was removed by the ease with which the survivors could obtain that standard, and accumulate from a considerable margin beyond it. The physiologists of the time, however, averred that the human race suffered a permanent diminution in the number of teeth, which had been always possessed by those who were born before the visitation of the Black Death. I make no doubt that the population speedily righted itself, as it has done on many other occasions when a sudden or abnormal destruction of human life has occurred in a people and the people has a recuperative power. That they had this power is proved by the events which followed.

I stated above that probably a third of the population perished. Froissart made the same estimate a generation later, when fear had ceased to disturb the judgment; and, as I have said, it is described as having been peculiarly deadly to persons in the vigour of life. It is certain that the immediate consequence of the plague was a dearth of labour, an excessive enhancement of wages, and a serious difficulty in collecting the harvests of those landowners who depended on

a supply of hired labour for the purpose of getting in their crops. We are told that these crops were often suffered to rot in the fields for want of hands; that cattle and sheep roamed at large over the country for lack of herdsmen; that land went out of cultivation; and that the grandees were utterly impoverished. I have referred already to the collateral evidence of an extraordinary falling off in the assessments under customary taxes. Many of the lords excused their tenants' rents lest they should quit their holdings from a want of labour and the increasing and excessive cost of materials; the omission of rent sometimes extending to a half, sometimes for a term of years, as the landowner could arrange with the tenant. So, says Knighton, "they who had let lands on labour-rents to tenants, such rents as are customary in villeinage, were compelled to relieve and remit such labour, and either to utterly excuse them or to rehabilitate their tenants on easier terms and less payments, lest the loss and ruin should become irreparable and the land lie utterly uncultivated." It appears, therefore, that in the panic, the confusion, and the loss which ensued on the Great Plague, that process which, as I said before, was going on already, the commutation of labour-rents for money payments, was precipitated; that the lords readily gave in to compositions; and that even less than had hitherto been demanded in exchange for the service was arranged for the future. The plague, in short, had almost emancipated the surviving serfs.

I shall point out below what were the actual effects of this great and sudden scarcity of labour. At present I merely continue the narrative. Parliament was broken up when the plague was raging. The king, however, issued a proclamation, which he addressed to William, the primate, and circulated among the sheriffs of the different counties, in which he directed all officials that no higher than customary wages should be paid, under the penalties of amercement. The king's mandate, however, was universally disobeyed, for the farmers were compelled to leave their crops ungathered, or to comply with the demands of the labourers. When the king found that his proclamation was unavailing, he laid, we are told, heavy

penalties on abbots, priors, barons, crown tenants, and those who held land under mesne lords, if they paid more than customary rates. But the labourers remained masters of the situation. Many were said to have been thrown into prison for disobedience ; many, to avoid punishment or restraint, fled into forests, where they were occasionally captured. The captives were fined, and obliged to disavow under oath that they would take higher than customary wages for the future. But the expedients were vain, labour remained scarce, and wages, according to all previous experience, excessive.

As soon as Parliament could meet, the proclamation was reduced to the form of a statute, which remained, with the proclamation, a law, till both were formally repealed by 5 Elizabeth, Cap. 4. The statute contained eight clauses :— (1) No person under sixty years of age, whether serf or free, shall decline to undertake farm labour at the wages which had been customary in the king's twentieth year (1347), except they lived by merchandize, were regularly engaged in some mechanical craft, were possessed of private means, or were occupiers of land. The lord was to have the first claim to the labour of his serfs, and those who declined to work for him or for others are to be sent to the common gaol. (2) Imprisonment is decreed against all persons who may quit service before the time which is fixed in their agreements. (3) No other than the old wages are to be given, and the remedy against those who seek to get more is to be sought in the lord's court. (4) Lords of manors paying more than the customary amount are to be liable to treble damages. (5) Artificers are to be liable to the same conditions, the artificers enumerated being saddlers, tanners, farriers, shoemakers, tailors, smiths, carpenters, masons, tilers, pargetters, carters, and others. (6) Food must be sold at reasonable prices. (7) Alms are strictly forbidden to able-bodied labourers. (8) Any excess of wages taken or paid can be seized for the king's use towards the payment of a fifteenth and tenth lately granted. The statute provides for the difference between summer and winter wages, and guards against the emigration of the town population to country places in summer. In answer to com-

plaints from the employers of labour, the Statute of Labourers is constantly re-enacted, with accumulated penalties and precautions,—penalties sometimes laid on the labourer only, sometimes on the employer, sometimes on both. An attempt, which was, I believe, premature, was made to enforce apprenticeship in handicrafts at the beginning of the fifteenth century, with the view of making the agricultural labourers an ever-increasing residuum, and thereby securing cheap labour for the tenant and the lord.

The Statute of Labourers may have induced some slight effect on the wages of farm labourers. The peasantry were under the eye of the lord's steward or bailiff, and might have been denounced and punished if they claimed more than the law allowed them. But they had great power of combination,—a power which they used, perhaps, in a manner which made it very difficult to enforce the statute, for the enforcement of it is given to the manor court, where the goodwill of the tenants was essential to harmonious action between lord and tenants. This combination the statute called the "malice of servants in husbandry." But there was the pretence of submission to the statute in the bailiffs' rolls, which might have been taken in evidence. After the Black Death, payments are frequently entered in these rolls, at a particular rate, and this a very exalted one. These payments are drawn through with a pen, and a less sum substituted. Thus, in 1349, on one estate, the bailiff enters 5*d.* as the price at which wheat was threshed. A line is drawn through the figure and 3*d.* substituted. In the next year, wheat, rye, peas, and vetches are threshed at 6*d.*, barley at 3*d.*, oats at 2*d.* But a pen is drawn through these rates, and 2½*d.*, 1½*d.* and 1*d.* are substituted. In the same year, barley is reaped at 1*s.* 2*d.* at first, but the sum is altered to 1*s.* Very many of these instances could be quoted. Occasionally, but rarely, the hirer of labour makes similar changes in artizans' labour, as though to show obedience to the statute.

I cannot help thinking that these transparent erasures are simulated, and that they point to evasions of the statute. The labourer, if he did not receive his full money wages, was

compensated in some covert way to the full extent of the previous entry, and by some means which would not come under the penalties of the law, and the process by which these penalties might be enforced. There might be larger allowances at harvest time, a more liberal concession of common rights, or, as I have often seen, a license given to a shepherd to turn his own sheep into the lord's pasture, or some analogous equivalent to a necessary, but, under the statute, an illegal money payment. Even though we take the substituted entries, we shall find that a great rise in the wages of labour was effected. We know that this rise was in direct contravention of the law,—a law created in the interest of those who employed labour, and, therefore, who wished to have it cheap, and who might be within the risk of the penalties imposed on employers for violating that law which they had probably been instrumental in enacting, but were compelled to incur. Besides, the wages of many kinds of labourers whose callings were enumerated in the statute were not affected by the law at all. These men took their full increase. It was no marvel that Parliament constantly complained that the Statute of Labourers was not kept. The marvel is that they did not see that it could not possibly be kept. But the straits in which the capitalist landowner found himself were sufficiently serious for any one; and the landowner might be pardoned for believing, that if he could fix, as he thought he could, the price of provisions and materials, he could also fix the price of labour. He clung to this delusion for centuries, and at one time he seemed to have achieved what he desired. But he paid for his remedy in a far more ruinous way than that of giving what would have been in the end cheaper labour than he actually procured.

I mentioned in a previous chapter that the rate of profit derived from agricultural operations, after all charges had been deducted and an average allowance had been made for rent, when the occupier was also lord, was about 20 per cent. on the capital invested, about 2 per cent. being represented by the rents of assize and manorial receipts. This estimate has been taken from an actual balance-sheet, in a year of

average, or rather more than average, fertility, but when the price of stock was, on the other hand, rather high, and so returned more than the ordinary profit to the farmer. Still, it will be remembered that the superintendence by the bailiff was a heavy charge on the owner's profits, or, at least, was a charge from which the small proprietor was free. It will be obvious that, with such a rate of profit before them, landowners, who possessed by inheritance a large amount of live and dead stock, would naturally cultivate their land themselves. There was, indeed, no way in which they could use their property to equal advantage.

In the year which I have taken, 1332-3, the outlay, though in some particulars large, is, on the whole, very much an average. The charges which come under the head of necessary expenses are rather high, but the bad debts are very low, and the cost of labour is so small as to suggest that some part of the regular cost of farm labour must have been omitted or put under another head. In another year we shall find a large cost incurred for fittings to the mill; in a second, a serious loss in customary or ordinary rents; in a third, a heavy loss of stock, and the consequent necessity of large purchases. An enormous quantity of cider was this year produced from the orchard, and, therefore, the spring must have been mild and the summer genial. On the whole I cannot but think that the year was in no way exceptional, and that the rate of profit on agricultural operations was neither unduly exalted nor unduly depressed.

Now if we take the balance-sheet of the same estate in the year 1350-1, we shall see the full effects of the loss of life and the scarcity of hands which ensued from the plague. The whole family of the bailiff, as I have more than once said, had perished. The rents of assize have sunk to one-third their former amount. The fulling mill is abandoned; there is no tenant for it. No one will give more than 22*s.* for the corn-mill—the previous rent having been 50*s.*; and next year there is no tenant to be found at all. The exits of the manor are a little more than a fourth of the sum previously received, and the profit of the court is not a tenth. The

harvest had been poor, for notwithstanding the loss of population, the price of wheat was 50 per cent. above the average, and the crop was small, the sales being less than two-thirds of the earlier year. The profits of the dairy are about three-fifths of those in 1332, and about half the amount of stock is sold. On the other hand, the expenses are very heavy. The outlay is cut down ; but little is spent on repairs, nothing but what is absolutely necessary in order that farm operations should be carried on is bought. Labour in harvest time and in the manor house costs three times what it did in 1332. There is a great increase in the cost of all services, and of such articles as depend mainly on labour for their manufactured value.

The expenses exceeded the receipts. The new bailiff, however, possesses a quantity of wool, the accumulations of two years. He had no doubt kept it in hand in the hopes of more remunerative prices. He had good reason for this caution, for wool had been sold at little more than three-fifths the money value which it realised in 1332. Then there were some of the chattels of the deceased bailiff and his family, which could hardly be reckoned among the profits of the farm, but an accidental escheat. Without them the profit for the year is only 4 per cent., with them it is 5½. In all these calculations I have taken corn and stock at their average prices for the year, when the actual value of any item is not given, as is of course the case with anything except what is actually bought and sold. In the next year the owners of the estate did not lose heart, they sowed a larger breadth of corn than usual, and strove to carry on their operations, only to meet with a second failure. Four years later, in 1354, there were lower prices and greater plenty. But the old rates of profit on such farming operations as had been carried on by the capitalist landowner had entirely passed away, never to be recovered, at least to their full amount. Sooner or later, labour must be hired at the old prices, or a new system must be adopted.

Although I am by no means convinced that the erased figures were not paid to the labourer, and that the substituted

amounts were, I have always assumed that the after-thought was the real payment. Even under these circumstances the rise in agricultural labour was enormous; and if, as we are told, the young and healthy were the principal victims of the disease, the quality of the labour must have been considerably deteriorated.

In the autumn of the year 1349, the fullest effect is induced on the price of agricultural labour, in the Eastern, Midland, and Southern Counties. The cost of threshing wheat is nearly doubled in the first division, that of barley and oats considerably more than doubled. In the Midland and Southern Counties the rise is even greater for wheat and barley, but oats, in the south, are still threshed at the old rates. The price in the west is raised, but in a far less degree, and, indeed, it appears that Western England did not suffer so much from the disease and the consequent paucity of hands as the greater part of the rest of the country did. But the prices of this year are panic rates. Even if the Statute of Labourers had not been passed, a fall would have ensued, though the price of labour, proclamations and statutes notwithstanding, did not ever fall to its old rates.

If we take the whole period from 1350 to 1400, when the prices paid for labour had been steadied by custom, and examine the divisions of England which it will be convenient to take, we shall find that the final rise in the prices of threshing, taking the three principal kinds of grain together, is 60 per cent. in the Eastern Counties, 73 in the Midland, 48 in the Southern, 37 in the Western, and 59 in the Northern. The most notable rise is that in the payment for threshing oats. But the prices paid for this service had been very low, and, as may be expected, the dearth of hands told far more on low-priced labour than it did on high-priced. This is strikingly illustrated in the price of women's labour. Before the plague, women were employed in field work, as in reaping straw after the corn was cut, in hoeing, in planting beans, in washing sheep, and sometimes in serving the thatcher and tiler. Generally they are paid at the rate of a penny a day, but sometimes less. After the plague, women's labour is

rarely recorded, but they are seldom paid less than twopence, sometimes as much as threepence, a day. The same facts are observed in boys' labour, which becomes much dearer.

The rise in the wages of harvest work is equally suggestive. Naturally the increase should be less as the rate in the old time was higher. But against this is to be set the opportunity which the labourer had of pressing his claim in a time of urgency. In the first place, the rate is equalised, or nearly so. Before this event, the highest price was paid for barley, the lowest for rye and oats. Now the same, or nearly the same, rate is secured for all. The price, too, is constantly rising. The old average was about 5½*d.* an acre. It rises at once to 7*d.* and 7½*d.*, and soon is much more, so that it is evident that the Statute of Labourers was from the first entirely inoperative as regards harvest work. For the ten years 1371-80, it is more than double what it was before the plague. We shall see hereafter how serious were the consequences which ensued from this progressive exaltation in the price of harvest labour. About 1770, as Young tells us in his "Eastern Tour," vol. iii., the rate for reaping wheat, the only corn reaped, was 5*s.* an acre; for mowing other corn, 1*s.* In the decade I am referring to it is 10*d.* all round, though nearly every kind of grain was below the average price. With corn of all kinds at an average of 3*s.* 8½*d.*, and reaping at 10*d.* the acre, the peasant in Young's time got a little more than one-tenth of the price of a quarter of wheat for his labour, and the fourteenth century peasant about two-ninths of the value of the whole produce.

The general rise of harvest work, however, if we omit the exceptional period 1371-90, is 59½ per cent., the reaping of the acre of wheat and barley rising by 51, bigg by 44, rye by 47, beans, peas, and vetches by 59, and oats by 69, per cent. But after the plague, the cultivation of bigg and rye becomes increasingly rare. Had this not occurred, I am convinced that the invariable rule in prices, whether of labour or food; that in a general rise of anything in demand, what was paid for or purchased at the lowest rate previously gets the largest increase subsequently, would have been again exhibited. The rise effected in the labour of mowing grass is not so consider-

able. But it is found to be 34 per cent. above the old rates. I should not expect that so notable an increase would be effected in the rate at which grass was mowed by the acre, as in ordinary harvest work. The mower is hired at a time when—I am speaking of the fourteenth century, when early summer ploughing for root-crops was unknown—agricultural labour is least in demand, and, therefore, better bargains could be made for it. But at the same time, if we refer to the parallel already cited, the prices paid for labour in the middle of the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the facts when compared are very striking. The rate paid for mowing grass, on the authority of this writer, Arthur Young, was a maximum of 2*s.* 6*d.* an acre, but was ordinarily 2*s.* At the latter rate the labourer received no more than the equivalent of a twenty-fourth part of a quarter of wheat; at the former rate it was about a nineteenth; whereas before the plague the rate was about a thirteenth of the quarter; and in the latter part, *i.e.*, after the plague, it rose to one-tenth. I have already observed that in the eighteenth century the price paid for mowing an acre of corn is far less than that given for mowing an acre of grass.

The price paid for the thatcher's labour is equally suggestive. He was practically a farm-servant, employed to keep buildings in repair, when the thatch was worn out or imperfect, as occasion required, but constantly to cover stacks after harvest, and hayricks before harvest. His labour attains a slight and permanent rise after the great famines of 1315-21, but a far greater rise afterwards. He is always accompanied by a help or *homo*. This assistant is ordinarily a woman, and the wages are frequently paid conjointly, though sometimes separately. This is explained by the fact that the help was very often the thatcher's wife or daughter, or perhaps young son. When the wages are paid separately before the plague, the rate is about a penny a day: afterwards it rises to 2½*d.*, or by an increase of 125 per cent.

Now we might expect that a thatcher's employment was influenced generally by the two causes which affected or moderated labour prices. His services were occasionally needed

when the roofing of houses and barns was to be done, and if his wages were over high, this demand might be economized. But no such economy was possible in the roofing of ricks and haystacks. Hence we should expect that the rise in his wages would not equal that of other kinds of farm labour. It is actually 48 per cent. But if we take the payments made to himself and his help together, the proportion is sure to be enhanced by the extraordinary increase made for the helper's services. It is found to amount to 79 per cent. Even this is less than the amount paid for the two services taken separately. I conclude, that if the help was, as I have said, his wife, daughter, or young son, a slightly lower rate of remuneration would be agreed on than that demanded or paid when the bailiff or employer was hiring two persons whose bargains with him were independent.

It is necessary to follow out the facts in the wages of artizans. These are chiefly the carpenter, the mason, the tiler, the tiler and help, the slater, the slater and help, and the sawyer, either by the day and the couple, or by the hundred feet of plank; this latter, the only kind of piece work which can be conveniently handled, being taken as almost identical with the day's work of a pair of sawyers. The others are paid by the day.

There are two kinds of carpenters regularly employed. The one is engaged on ordinary farm work, and was in frequent requisition. The other was employed for the more difficult business of house building, and the more delicate business of joinery, for which there was plenty of occupation in the domestic buildings of the more opulent classes. The best paid carpenter gets about 25 per cent. above the average paid to common carpenters, though, in taking a general average, I have thought it fair to include the former's wages with those of all others, as he may have been engaged at lower rates, or even the same rate if he were a good workman, on commoner kinds of employment. Here the same facts appear. He gets a slight permanent rise after the great famines, and a large one after the great plague. The common carpenter's wages experience an enhancement

of 48 per cent., and, exactly in accordance with the rule laid down as the regulator of prices, the highest kind of carpenter's work gets a rise of only 42 per cent. Masons, however, are more fortunate. The rise in their wages is 60 per cent. It is very probable that the combination which these artizans were able to effect, the regulations by which they might govern their trade, and the manner in which they were certainly associated together under the title of free masons (as is proved by the fact that these combinations were made felony by 3 Hen. VI., cap. 1), would have enabled them to take full advantage of the situation. The tilers' wages rose only 34 per cent. But the joint wages of the tiler and help rose 90 per cent. The evidence of the slaters' wages is less clear. The calling was confined to some of the Midland Counties, where fissile oolite had long been used for roofing, and, as we have seen, the general rise in the rate of wages was very great. It would seem that the increase is 60 per cent. in this kind of labour. The rise in the wages of the pair of sawyers is 70 per cent., and that of sawing by the hundred feet is nearly the same amount.

The rise in agricultural labour is, all kinds of men's work being taken together, about 50 per cent; and of women's work, fully 100 per cent. When taken together, the rise in the wages of artizans' labour is almost exactly the same as that effected in the case of the husbandmen. The result is marked, universal, permanent, and conclusive, even if we had not on record the complaints of the landowners in Parliament that the Statute of Labourers was entirely inoperative.

The peculiarity of the situation is that, while every kind of agricultural produce experiences no rise, everything to which labour adds its principal value is exalted proportionately. Thus the price of wool, though temporarily depressed, recovers, though only to its old rate. There is no appreciable alteration in the market value of cheese, butter, and eggs, in the price of the different kinds of fat and candles. The price of wax and cider remain the same; and so does that of firewood, except during the very height of the plague. But there is a rise of 50 per cent. in the price of charcoal.

The price of salt is nearly doubled, that of lime and iron more than doubled. The price of cattle rises 60 per cent., of tiles 75. Crests, *i.e.*, ridge tiles, are three times as dear as they were before the plague; and the different kinds of nails, such as were fashioned by the town smith, and sold by retail to his customers, are proportionately enhanced. Quite as great is the exaltation in the price of millstones, articles which the lord was constrained to buy if he were to get the profits of his most lucrative franchise, the manor mill. The price of hurdles, which are generally purchased, is exactly doubled; of horse-shoes more than doubled, as are also horse-shoe nails and plough gear. The share and the shoe are almost doubled. The iron clouts, by which the frame and axles of a cart are strengthened, are nearly trebled in cost; and the nails by which they were fastened rose as other nails did. Plain wheels—that is, wheels formed from the trunk of a tree, with holes bored through them for the axles to run on—are more than doubled in price. Wheelwrights' wheels are nearly trebled; and the iron framework of a pair of cart-wheels, one of the most costly parts of agricultural furniture, rose by 130 per cent. There was scarce an article needed for agricultural operations, the cost of which was not doubled instantly after the calamity occurred, and which did not remain at these exalted and ruinous rates. Even the coarse canvas, which was employed for fans, mill-sails, and sacks, was nearly doubled in price. The hair-cloth used for drying malt was more than doubled, as was linen for shirts and sheets, and that which was used for table, with most of which probably, if not with all of which, the peasant dispensed. The least rise was effected in woollen cloth, one of the indirect illustrations of the fact that the domestic manufacture of woollen goods was a very general, and also what is called a bye industry. Lead, again, a metal used very frequently and generally in the middle ages, was more than doubled in price. Tin, pewter, or solder articles, substantially the same, rose 50 per cent.; while little increase occurred in the price of brass and copper vessels. They were probably economized, and, lasting a long time, few purchases were made of them.

I have stated before that in the face of these serious changes in the value of these articles, on the regular and cheap supply of which the success of capitalist agriculture in the fourteenth century so largely depended, there was no corresponding rise in the price of provisions. The different kinds of grain are not appreciably dearer, beyond what is occasionally due to the unfavourable character of the seasons. Oxen and cows are a little dearer, but in no such degree as to suggest that there was any rise of general prices to account for the change. The price of horses is absolutely stationary. There is no change in the price of sheep or in that of pigs. Poultry, too, is similarly unchanged in money value. The loss of the agriculturist was confined to the cost of labour and the products of labour, and the only thing which could have been sacrificed was rent, or rather, under the circumstances which prevailed at the time, the profits of capitalist husbandry. The fact that these profits had to bear the first shock of the crisis, and therefore that a little time intervened in which the landowner could look round him, and probably take some new departure, and so keep his fixed rents, probably saved English society from a severer shock than it would have otherwise experienced. No doubt, as we indeed have seen, these fixed rents were at first reduced and generally imperilled. In many cases, where the landowner had leased his land, and had abandoned cultivation on his own account, he was constrained to remit a portion, or even, as Knighton says, to effect a new and permanent composition with his old tenants; for just as rent, when agriculture improves and a country progresses, is a constantly increasing quantity, so when a serious reverse takes place, when labour is dearer and deteriorates, or capital is lost or scanty, or agricultural profits are otherwise depressed, it is natural, nay, inevitable, that rent should have its reverses, and decline in value and quantity, even for a time to a vanishing point. We shall see hereafter how the English landowners of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries applied themselves, when they found that parliamentary regulations were futile and misleading, to the solution of the great problem which lay before them.

One article of food rose greatly in price, was, in fact, doubled in amount. This was fish, especially herrings, an article which derives all its value from human labour, the raw material, so to speak, being free to all. The consumption of herrings was all but universal, even in the inland counties of England, large numbers of them being salted and smoked, or pickled without being smoked, and called in the former case red, in the latter white, herring. It would seem that the barrel or cade of smoked herring was marketed earlier than the barrel of white herring; for the former is found in the purchases long before the latter. But in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the art of the fish-curer had not reached that amount of skill and variety which was common in the fifteenth, and we know from various sources that much capital and enterprise were devoted to deep-sea fishing in many of the eastern ports and at Bristol during the reigns of the House of Lancaster.

All at once, then, and as by a stroke, the labourer, both peasant and artizan, became the master of the situation in England. The change was as universal as it was sudden. The lord found on all sides a stationary and retrograde market for every kind of produce, in which he dealt as a seller, and a rapidly advancing market for everything he needed as a buyer. Even if he should succeed, after making desperate efforts, in recovering labour at the old prices; if the old but deep-seated delusion that law can regulate prices should turn out in the end to be possible as regards the wages of farm hands; should the police of the manor be only armed with sufficient power for the purpose, he was still confronted with the difficulty that everything he wished to buy, beyond the labour employed on his own fields, had risen by 50 or 100 or even 200 per cent. Even on his estate nearly one-half of the charges of cultivation set down to the credit side of the bailiff's account are derived from outlay, over the amount of which no proclamation, statute, or ordinance could have had any influence whatever, and the exaltation of price on these items alone would reduce his profits to a minimum. If the value of his own produce had risen to an equivalent, the void would

be filled, but no Act of Parliament could be devised by which the producer should be able to compel the consumer to pay 50 or 100 or 200 per cent. more for bread and beer, beef and mutton, pork and poultry. Besides, he was not the only dealer. A number of industrious and prosperous tenants were settled round his manor house, who tilled their own lands, from which they could not be evicted; on the profits and improvements of which he could not, as long as they paid their dues, lay his clutches, and it was certain that if he strove to force an enhanced price for what his bailiff had to sell, they would undersell him. They were protected against him, as he was against the king, by custom,—a custom which he dared not break if he could, and could not if he dared. No position could be more unsatisfactory. If he left matters as they were, ruin to all appearance was imminent. If he strove to remedy the mischief by violent or unusual means, the danger was serious. We shall see, by-and-by, that he tried the remedy of force, and signally failed.

The peasant farmer shared the new charges which were put on his calling, but not in the same degree. The costs of the harvest to the lord amounted to £3 13*s.* 9*d.* before the plague, they are swollen to £12 19*s.* 10*d.* in the year following it. From this charge the surviving peasant farmer was free. He found his own labour on his own holding, and hired none. Besides, he could, after his work was over, hire himself and his children out at the enhanced rates; or, if he had thriven and saved, he could double his own holding, and that on easy terms, for the lord was seeking tenants, not tenants seeking lords. Perhaps the household of the miller was desolate and without inhabitants, and he was one of those who offered less than half the old rent for it; or, maybe, he aspired to the bailiff's vacant place, for the lord was not going to desert his old calling without an effort. Only he could now save his wife and daughter from field labour, and set them to spinning and weaving for the household; perhaps do better at that than they did at the drudgery of the field. The tools had become dear, the sickle and scythe were doubled in price, and the shares and plough-shoes were going the same way.

But he would patch up his stock of husbandry tools in the winter, and rub along for a time with the old, as his lord did.

The free labourer, and for the matter of that, the serf, was, in his way, still better off. Everything he needed was as cheap as ever, and his labour was daily rising in value. He had bargained for his labour rent, and was free to seek his market. If the bailiff would give him his price, well; if not, there were plenty of hands wanted in the next village, or a short distance off. If an attempt was made to restrain him, the Chiltern Hills and the woods were near, and he could soon get into another county. There was no fear in these times that the lord could spare to follow him, or that they who wanted his service would freely give him up. He had slaved and laboured at the farm, and now his chance was come, and he intended to use it. So the peasant farmer and the labourer were to try conclusions with the landlord. We shall see how the struggle was fought out. The machinery which the former used had been long in preparation, though no one guessed its efficiency.

CHAPTER IX.

DISCONTENT—COMBINATION—INSURRECTION.

Growing Discontent with the Papal Court—Sections of the English Church—The Party of the Fourteenth Century—The Secession to Avignon—Attitude of England to the Pope in the French War—The Mission of Wiklif—His Residence in Oxford, and Safety in the University—The Poor Priests, and Wiklif's Theory of their Office—The Relative Condition of Landowners, Peasant Proprietors, and Labourers—The Course of Events after the First Statute of Labourers—Counter Organization of the Labourers—The Need of Agents—The Attitude of the Lords—The Teaching of the Poor Priests—The Outbreak—The Trivial Causes of it—The First Movement in Kent—Events in London—The Conference at Mile End and in Smithfield—The Insurrection Collapses—The Outbreak at Norwich—The Energy of the Bishop—The Serfs of St. Albans—The Prosecution and Punishment of the Leaders—The discovery of the Organization—Proceedings in Parliament—The Attitude of the Government—The Mayor of Cambridge and the University—Resistance to Reform—Arguments against and for it—The Demands of the Serfs Conceded—The Persecution of the Lollards—Causes of the Success of Religious Movements—Discontent, the Outbreak of Prosperous Times—The Continuity of the Lollard Movement in the Fifteenth Century—Its Influence at the Reformation.

FOR many years the English people had been getting discontented with the Papal Court. In the days of Becket, this court, though it had to take account with an antipope, was too strong even for so vigorous a monarch as Henry II., because the people still bowed to the authority and believed in the sanctity of the Holy See. At the beginning of the thirteenth century it was even more powerful than in the days of Hildebrand; and the influence it possessed was laboriously exercised by the active genius of Innocent III. His successor, Honorius III., was able to use the machinery which Innocent had devised. But soon afterwards the inherent vices of the Papal Court weakened

the pope's influence; and, except in purely spiritual matters, on which as yet no general interest was felt, all hostility to which was perhaps exterminated for a time, the influence of the papacy was rapidly declining. The excommunications and interdicts, at which a generation or two before the boldest trembled, had become far less terrible. When the pope could excommunicate Grostête for maintaining the discipline of the Church against a scandalous act of nepotism, and Grostête could afford to disregard the censures of the pontiff as long as he knew he was in the right, to denounce the unrighteous and greedy harpies of the pope's court, and, while still professing veneration for the spiritual functions of the father of Christendom, to repudiate his authority in secular affairs, a great change had come over men's minds. The position of a ruler who shares his authority, or divides his responsibility with his ministers or his court, is safer than that of one who controls everything himself. But the ruler who delegates his authority, soon ceases to be infallible and autocratic. The same nation, which in the twelfth century would have sided with the pope in the quarrel about clerical privilege against the second Henry, would have agreed in the thirteenth to a Statute of Provisors if the third Henry had been energetic enough, or perhaps independent enough, to take action in this direction.

Towards the latter end of the thirteenth century, the English clergy, with the connivance or at the instigation of the pope, refused to make a grant to Edward I., tried conclusions with him, and were signally worsted. Thenceforward they take care not to provoke the king, and the papal party in England ceases to be a dangerous power to the State. The English Church had indeed always three sections within it:—One, which busied itself with affairs of state, and supplied from time to time some very able and energetic politicians, was, to anticipate a word from later ecclesiastical history, profoundly Erastian, and exceedingly secular in its sympathies. Examples of this party were the clerical officials of the Exchequer. At the time of Becket's elevation they were all of this mind it seems, for they were

willing to accept the Constitutions of Clarendon, which they must have been aware were not only distasteful to the pope, but were a naked submission of the English Church to the royal authority. Such persons were always found in the English Church, and as long as it remains an establishment, always will be found. Such men were Roger of Salisbury in the twelfth, and Wolsey in the sixteenth century. The second party in the English Church is essentially Anglican. It stands aloof equally from secular subservience and from foreign complications. This element, again, has always been present. Langton and Grostête are among its earliest types. Gardiner and Bonner represented it at the Reformation. Laud revived it in the seventeenth century; and Atterbury was a type of it in the eighteenth, till he became the dupe or the tempter of Harley and St. John. It has been revived in our own day, and is vigorous and pretentious. The third is that which sincerely allied itself with Rome, and saw in submission to the papacy the unity of Christendom. In the thirteenth century this was an active and not a very creditable party. In the fourteenth, and on to the Reformation, it consisted mainly of the monks, especially of those orders on whom the pope had conferred great immunities.

In the fourteenth century there sprung up a fourth party in the Church, which was at first favoured, then silenced, and finally persecuted by the other three. Disagreeing in other particulars, the Official, the Anglican, and the Papal clergy were ultimately agreed in striving to suppress the Lollards. The annals of these obscure but enthusiastic sectaries have never been written; perhaps the materials for the history could not be collected. But there is enough known to show that they were numerous and formidable; that they were credited with political and social aims which were highly distasteful, and perhaps dangerous to existing authorities and powerful interests; and that the tenets of the sect were widely disseminated, enthusiastically adopted, and doggedly retained. As might be expected, they had the greatest hold in the towns, and especially in the manufacturing districts. That the persecution directed against them constrained them

to make their tenets and their rites a secret is highly probable; but it would be a very incorrect estimate of human nature to imagine that the hierarchy succeeded in extirpating that which they hated so heartily. The hatred felt by the clergy to the Lollards was naturally heightened by their own enforced submission to the Crown.

Early in the fourteenth century the popes migrated from Rome to Avignon. The city of Rome had not escaped the infection of that passionate desire for liberty which animated Italy in the fourteenth century, which made it the scene of so much intellectual activity, of such furious feuds, and ultimately of so degraded a servitude. Rome was no pleasant place for a pontiff to live in, and Boniface VIII. had troubles enough. His next successor but one migrated to Avignon; and for more than seventy years the pontiffs lived in a town in the south of France, were all Frenchmen, and were thoroughly devoted to, or dependents on, the French king. Still, so great was the force of habit, that the rest of the European states acquiesced in the attitude taken by their spiritual head, who was fortunately, except for a short time, not troubled with an antipope. I cannot but think that the indifference shown at this voluntary residence in Avignon is a symptom of the decline of the papal authority. At the beginning of the fifteenth century it had become a pious opinion with most good and devout men, that a general council was superior in articles of faith and Church government to the pope himself,—an opinion which would have been strangely unnatural a century before. The pope had been a reformer, he then became a despot, and he was rapidly sinking into being a huckster of spiritual wares.

The long course of the French war, and its alternate successes and reverses, during which it was alleged that the Avignon pope was on the side of the English enemy, prepared the minds of the English people for a revolt against the papal authority, and especially against the encroachments of the Roman see and court. The pope most inopportunely claimed the arrears of the tribute promised by John, and its punctual payment for the future; and the

king, shrewdly appealing to his parliament, enlisted public opinion against the claim. Great discontent was felt at the practice long adopted by the pope of nominating his creatures to benefices, and even to sees, before they were vacant; or, as it was technically called, making such dignities the subject of provision. This practice had always been unpopular, and the opportunity for putting an end to it seemed to have come. Hence, in 1350, a statute was passed, prohibiting the practice, and enacting fine and ransom, with imprisonment, on those who produced such letters from the pope. But it was one thing to pass a statute curtailing the pope's power, another to secure obedience to it; and the Statute of Provisors was very indifferently kept. In point of fact, the elections to bishoprics and deaneries was theoretically, and by the Great Charter, in the hands of close corporations. But the king was always anxious to nominate to them, and frequently did not scruple to invoke the aid of the very power against which he had procured the enactment of the law. At last, in July 1371, Edward sent a kind of legation, of seven persons in all, to Bruges, with a view towards effecting a settlement of the question with the pope. These persons succeeded in obtaining an authoritative document from the Roman see, in which the practice was surrendered, and a compromise was effected. But it was by no means a final act. Martin V. threatened to put England under an interdict, near sixty years afterwards, in case this obnoxious Statute of Provisors was not repealed, and it was supposed that but for his opportune death he would have put his threat into execution. One of the commissioners was the celebrated Wiklif.

This personage has had a more extensive influence in England and Europe generally than any other English ecclesiastic before or since. He was born in or about the year 1324, at a small village in Yorkshire, from which his name was derived. It is said that his kinsfolk resided in the manor house till the seventeenth century, and that they remained strict papists after the Reformation. He went to study at Oxford, where is not known. But he was a fellow of

Merton College in 1357, and master of Balliol in 1361. After several preferments, during the tenure of which he generally resided at the University of Oxford, he was appointed to the benefice of Lutterworth, whither he ultimately retired. Here he died on Dec. 31st, 1384. He received this living from the king, as a reward for his services on the embassy to Bruges. Wiklif is well known as a theologian, who evidently aspired to the influence in Oxford which Grostête had wielded a century before. In this capacity he had a vast following, and was the author of Lollardy, the repudiator of the pope's authority, the translator of the Bible, and the precursor of the Reformation. Crowds came to hear him from all parts of the world. Among them were many Bohemians, who, carrying his books and tenets back to their native country, and being proscribed with their leaders and teachers at the Council of Constance, provoked the war of the Hussites, as their descendants did the terrible strife of the Thirty Years' War two centuries later. But I am not concerned with Wiklif's religious opinions, except in so far as they are necessarily connected with his social and political theories.

The first objects of Wiklif's attack were the monks and the friars. The older orders had long become wealthy, worldly, luxurious, and, it was whispered, profligate. They were generally exempt from the authority of the bishop, and their independence was not favourable to their reputation. In order to purify the Church and counteract the vices of these older orders, Francis and Dominic, a century and a half before, had founded their famous fraternities of begging and preaching friars. These men were prohibited from acquiring any permanent property. Even the houses in which they lived were held in trust for them, and so popular were they in the early days of their career, that the town corporations eagerly became their trustees. They tended the sick, especially those who were affected with loathsome diseases, such as leprosy, which was then very common. As they could acquire no gain, they became the unsuspected confessors of the wealthy. They were exceedingly popular, especially the Dominicans, as preachers, and their homely, earnest dis-

courses were much sought after. Still, a century and a half of popularity had corrupted the friars and had diminished their reputation. Upon these monks and friars, and upon the secular clergy, whose lives and conduct the mission of the friars was supposed to rebuke, came the frightful calamity of the plague, with all the moral evil which such a social convulsion was sure to produce. Benefices were vacated and ignorant men were thrust into them, cloisters were emptied, and new monks, wholly unworthy of their calling, were professed. It seemed as though Satan were let loose, as the Apocalypse had predicted.

The University in which Wiklif resided was assured of its independence by the bulls of popes and the charters of kings. No bishop or archbishop, said the Chancellor of Oxford in Wiklif's time, has any authority over the University in matters of belief. It was, therefore, if a man could get an audience, a place where speculative novelties were tolerated. The fashion of the University, in which the graduates disputed against each other on all topics, aided in developing an inquiring, perhaps a sceptical habit of mind. So far was it from being an ecclesiastical foundation, that it was for a long time the only safe refuge for heterodox opinion. Now Wiklif's teaching was national. He despised the pope, and denounced the usurpations of the Roman Court. He argued that all ecclesiastics should be subject to the civil power. He made no distinction, says Melancthon, between the gospel and the state. He told the king, in a time of financial difficulty, when counselled as to the transmission of English money to the papal coffers, that the prohibition of such an operation was not only justifiable, but a public duty. He denounced the friars as the emissaries of the pope. He advocated the heavy taxation, perhaps the confiscation of the monasteries. He probably suggested the fable which he makes a lord tell in the Parliament of 1371, to the effect that a featherless owl came to an assembly of birds, and begged a feather from each bird present. In compassion they give him a plumage, when he suddenly turns into a hawk and begins to harry them. So they demanded their feathers back again, and

reduced him to the bare and beggarly condition in which he was when he first came as a mendicant. "This," said the lord, "is the history of the monks' wealth; and, if we are wise, we shall make them bare again." He probably urged that ecclesiastics should be excluded from secular offices, and formulated the petition to that effect which was presented to the king. As time went on, Wiklif, protected by John of Gaunt and his party, and by many noblemen who relished the courage and plainness with which he attacked the overgrown wealth of the clergy, uttered louder and bolder denunciations of the moral and political evils which, in his opinion, the papacy necessarily induced. As is well known, he was persecuted for these opinions, and practically silenced.

He had, however, before this occurred, taken a step, the effects of which neither he nor his contemporaries foresaw. In order to counteract the influence of the begging friars, who were as devoted to the pope as the Jesuits were afterwards, he established an order of persons whom he called poor priests, whom he had clothed in russet, that is, in cloth made of undyed black wool, and sent about barefoot to preach, and rouse men to good works. These men were to be entrusted at their discretion with the function of addressing the people, were responsible to no authority, and were provided with no credentials beyond their own zeal and convictions. It does not seem that they were to make any place their special residence, nor were they to report themselves to any person, nor to have any restraint put on their utterances. The pope, Wiklif held, had no more spiritual authority than any other ordained minister. The monks had no more intrinsic holiness by virtue of their profession than a wall has solidity because it has been whitewashed. No man should be imprisoned or hindered for conscience' sake. A wealthy Church is sure to be corrupt. Dominion is founded in grace, by which the reformer intended that allegiance to authority is due only when it is guaranteed by deserts and that authority is founded on merit. It is easy to see how passionate, earnest, and sympathetic men could gain influence by these teachings, and how terribly they might abuse their

influence. Wiklif had created an order of ecclesiastics on whom he had imposed no discipline; and these men speedily emancipated themselves from all control. Their violence of language, their contempt of authority, their advocacy of equality, in its coarsest and homeliest form, soon distinguished them, and disgusted those who had at first favoured the movement. Occasionally their vehemence exhausted itself. Some of the most violent of Wiklif's poor priests ultimately deserted the cause they had taken up, conformed to the existing order of things anew, rose to high rank in the Church, and persecuted that which they had aforetime preached.

My readers will remember that the crisis of the Black Death left the great landowners in very evil case, with rents and profits reduced, the latter almost to a nullity. The small proprietors had to bear some part of these exalted prices; but these were more than compensated by the advantages immediate and prospective of their position. But the labourers gained all which the landowners lost, and could extort what terms they liked from the necessities of their employers. This attitude was met by the Statute of Labourers, and the attempt to restrain wages to the rates which prevailed in 1347. The attempt failed. Year after year, almost century after century, the Parliament complained that the Statute of Labourers was not kept, re-enacted it, strove to make it effective, were baffled, adopted new and harsher expedients, and were disappointed. They tried to keep up the old system of capitalist cultivation, but gradually dropped it. Some, as the college from which I have derived so much information, let out all their lands to lease within ten years of the great plague. Some, more conservative, more hopeful, or more successful, continued the system a little way into the fifteenth century. Some of the landlords, especially those who lived near hill pastures, took extensively to sheep farming. A few, especially the monasteries, kept home farms in cultivation, mainly for the convenience which it was to them in order to supply their houses with certain kinds of produce. But sooner or later, in the great majority of cases

very soon, the old system was abandoned in despair, and the land was leased in a peculiar fashion, to which I shall refer hereafter, to tenants for terms of years.

Still, ineffectual as the enactments were, they were intended to be effectual, and were certain to be irritating. The peasants met the law by combinations. They organized themselves, subscribed, as we are expressly told, considerable sums of money for the defence and protection of the serfs, perhaps for the payment of fines. In plain modern English, the serfs entered into what are now called trades unions, and supported each other in resistance to the law and in demands for higher wages. This is especially noticeable among the peasantry, the upland folk, as they were called, to distinguish them from artizans and townspeople generally. These facts are proved by the averages of agricultural wages. At first it is only occasionally that the price of their services is excessively high in comparison with what had been customary. When such demands are effectual, they are so chiefly on harvest labour, when, naturally, the greatest pressure could be employed and felt. At last, twenty years after the first incidence of the plague, the combination appears to have been completely successful, and the price of harvest labour is more than double what it was before the plague, all kinds of reaping being paid for at the same excessive rate. This lasts without a break, except in one year, till the time of Tyler's insurrection, after which, though the price is still high, it is less than it was. The wages of other labour were steady at the enhanced rate which was obtained at and after the year 1350.

Now a combination such as that which is described by contemporary writers, and which the chroniclers certainly could not have invented, must have needed agents who were competent to organize, who could be trusted, and who could keep the particulars of their organization secret, if they could not the fact. But the peasants could not have done this among themselves. Any conference which they might have held would have been detected, suspected, and punished. The essence of mediæval society was that, in every manor, everyone knew everything about his neighbour. The lords,

armed with the force of law, would never have suffered a conspiracy against the interests of property to have been hatched at their doors. They would have brought their retainers, or some of the discharged soldiers, down on these wretched, isolated helots, and have slain them without mercy, if they had found that they were collecting money, making deposits of arms, and conspiring against the state. In their opinion, the revolt of the serfs, even the bare suspicion of a revolt, would have justified a massacre; and if we had on other evidence, we might be quite certain that the peasants would do all they could to avert suspicion from themselves.

When I first began to examine the social condition of England, as it is described by those who wrote at the time, and, afterwards, when I corrected the narrative by the unerring evidence of those statistical facts which bear on the circumstances of the case, the meaning of which was a secret to those who recorded them, I stated, though I had no doubts myself, what I thought was the course of events and the causes of what ultimately happened, as an hypothesis. Larger investigations, and, I may add, the general agreement of all who have studied the subject with me, convince me that the lords attempted, in despair of getting back to the old wages by law, to reverse the customary commutations of money for labour by force. Let me state, or re-state, the case. The lord had agreed to take, when labour, especially harvest labour, was plentiful and cheap, small sums of money in lieu of labour. Such labour was sure to be half-hearted, and had to be habitually watched by the bailiff or overlooker, in order that the serfs might not shirk their work. Besides, there were a number of ways in which a sullen or discontented serf might disappoint his employer or avenge himself. Money in hand would be better than unwilling labour, and so the commutation took place on very favourable terms to the serf, even when compared with the old labour prices. Now, however, it was urged, these people are demanding for the work which they were bound to do, and their lord's good nature has remitted, for an insignificant consideration, three

times the amount of the commutation. It is very possible also that perfidious lawyers, bailiffs, and agents pointed out to the impoverished and angry lords that, after all, in law and in past times these serfs had no rights at all; that they possessed what they had by the good-natured easiness of their superiors; and that their black ingratitude should be punished by resuming those lands and that liberty which had been so grossly abused. At any rate, they argued, we may well imagine, as follows: "The experiment is worth trying. The landed interest is perishing, and with it the ancient nobility, the chivalry, the gentry of the kingdom, its culture, its honour, its institutions, all that makes its character, enterprize, and prestige, and this by the malice and malignity of a mob of clowns, whose fancied rights we have, of all people, no reason to respect." Guided by these counsels, or of their own motion, they certainly strove to reverse the bargain which they had made with their serfs, and had engrossed on their manor rolls, determining to reduce them to villeinage again, or, at least, to exact the old labour rents.

They could not have anticipated, when they came to this determination and began to put it cautiously into execution, how the poor priests, who alone could traverse the country by right and without suspicion, would advise their followers. They could not have seen that these were precisely the persons who would organize resistance among the serfs, could win and keep their confidence, and could be trusted with their subscriptions, their plans, and their communications. Wiklif's poor priests had honeycombed the minds of the upland folk with what may be called religious socialism. By Wiklif's labours, the Bible men had been introduced to the new world of the Old Testament, to the history of the human race, to the primeval garden and the young world, where the first parents of all mankind lived by simple toil, and were the ancestors of the proud noble and knight, as well as of the down-trodden serf and despised burgher. They read of the brave times when there was no king in Israel, when every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and sat under his own vine and his own fig-tree, none daring to make him

afraid. They read how God, through His prophet, had warned Israel of the evils which would come to them when a king should rule over them, and how speedily this was verified in the conduct of the young Rehoboam, with his depraved and foolish counsellors, of how woe had been predicted to the people over whom a child should rule. The God of Israel had bade His people be husbandmen, and not mounted knights and men-at-arms. But, most of all, the preacher would dwell on his own prototype, on the man of God, the wise prophet who denounced kings and princes and high-priests, and, by God's commission, made them like a potter's vessel in the day of His wrath, or on those bold judges, who were zealous even to slaying. For with this book, so old, yet so new, the peasant preacher—we are told that many learnt to read when they were old that they might tell the Bible story—could stir up the souls of these clowns with the true narrative of another people, and would be sure that his way to their hearts and their confidence would be, as it always has been with the leaders of a religious revival, by entirely sympathising with their wrongs, their sufferings, and their hopes. And when they told them that the lords had determined to drag them back to their old serfdom, the preacher could discourse to them of the natural equality of man, of the fact that all, kings, lords, and priests, live by the fruits of the earth and the labour of the husbandman, and that it would be better for them to die with arms in their hands than to be thrust back, without an effort on their part, into the shameful slavery from which they had been delivered. And as their eyes kindled, and they grasped their staves, he could tell them to keep their ears open for the news of their deliverance, that on the password being given, they were at once to hie to the appointed place, where a great work could be done for God's people by His appointed servant. Sometimes the preacher was denounced, detected, and imprisoned, for Ball, one of the most active and outspoken of these poor priests, had been put into Maidstone gaol in consequence of his violent harangues.

This was the way in which the communications were kept

up, and the organization made ready to be called into activity at a moment's notice. The secret was well kept. The storm, which no politician of the time anticipated, burst on June 10th, 1381. The uprising of the upland folk was simultaneous. It extended from the coast of Kent to Scarborough, all through the Eastern towns. Norfolk, the richest English town of the fourteenth century after London, full of thriving artizans, who were the disciples of the poor priests, as the county was subsequently their hiding-place, fully shared in the insurrection, for the rioters took Norwich and stormed the castle. On the west it extended from Hampshire to Lancashire. The story of the insurrection is told by all the chroniclers. They connect the outbreak, it is true, with a trivial incident,—the outrage on Tyler's daughter and the Roman vengeance which he took on the ill-doer. Others ascribe the discontent to the poll-tax. It is true that the first was very unfair, being an equal contribution from all persons except beggars and mendicant friars, a triple tax being demanded from beneficed clergymen. This tax, however, though exacted at the time when combinations were general, seems to have caused no open expression of feeling. The second tax was graduated, was levied on the king's uncles as well as on the peasantry, for the dukes of royal blood and the archbishops were rated at five hundred and twenty times the tax of the labourer. The tax, too, was not imposed on married women. The third poll-tax, synchronous with Tyler's insurrection, was not so fair, for the maximum payment was sixty groats, the minimum, one. The limit of age in the first poll-tax was fourteen, in the second sixteen, in the third fifteen years of age.

The cause was far more deep-seated than a personal grievance and a personal outrage, as we might conclude from the evident concert with which the uprising was carried out. The true cause was the incidents of villeinage, and the dissatisfaction felt at revived oppression. It is noteworthy that Kent takes the lead in the movement. But there were no serfs in Kent. To have been born in that county, and to prove one's birth there, was a bar to the proceedings by

which a lord claimed the recovery of his serf. In the many accounts which I have read from the county of Kent, there is no trace of the serf-tenure or of the serf. The foremost place, then, which the men of Kent took, must be assigned to their sympathy with popular movements. It was traditional in the county. Kent was the headquarters of Cade's revolt in 1450, and took action in almost all considerable events up to the days of the Commonwealth. Under Tyler the commons of Kent liberated Ball from Maidstone gaol, and a burgess of Gravesend, who had been imprisoned by Sir Simon Burley on a plea of villeinage. They marched to London, occupied Blackheath and Southwark, and constrained Sir John Manly to communicate their demands to the king. Then they crossed the bridge and entered London, a thing which would have been impossible, unless divided counsels had distracted the city. There they burned John of Gaunt's new palace and sacked the hospital of St. John. Their animosity was specially directed against the Flemings, whom they dragged from the churches. In all likelihood this was the work of their associates in the city, with whom the Flemish merchants were always unpopular. These events took place on the 11th, 12th, and 13th of June. On the last of these days, Thursday, the insurgents encamped in London, probably in the open space near St. Paul's, or in Smithfield.

The city took counsel on Thursday evening. It is said that the mayor and some of the aldermen were anxious to attack the rebels by night, but that they were dissuaded by the Earl of Salisbury, who was, by the way, a partizan of Wiklif and the reforming party, on the ground that if the attack was repulsed everything would be lost. Three of the aldermen and certain of the council are said to have been friendly to the movement. During this night of terror, the young king, his mother, his two half-brothers, some of the nobles, and Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor, were lodged in the Tower, with only a slender garrison. On Friday morning the insurgents presented themselves at the Tower, and informed the king, who was not yet fifteen years old, that unless he granted them a conference

they would attack the Tower, capture it, and slay all that were in it. To satisfy them, the king left the Tower with his two brothers, and appointed the place of conference at Mile End. He sent his two brothers out of the way, for the Earl of Kent and Sir John Holand had already become notorious for their misdeeds. He had no sooner left the Tower than the rebels burst in, seized the Archbishop and certain others, and forthwith put them to death. In the sudden capture of the Tower, we must, I think, see that Tyler's insurrection was aided by old soldiers of the French wars; and in the murder of the archbishop, as in that of Stapledon fifty-four years before, the hatred entertained towards the officers of the Exchequer.

The king, it is said, with courage beyond his years, gave audience to the rioters at Mile End, and demanded what they wanted. They answered, "We will that you make us free for ever, ourselves, our heirs, and our lands, and that we be called no more bond, or so reputed." The king immediately assented. He bade them return to their homes, leaving two or three from each village, who should receive and carry back the charters. Many of the insurgents, misled it would seem by so prompt a compliance, obeyed, and quitted the city, and the king assigned one of his banners to each of the counties which had furnished complainants. It is more probable that Tyler was quite willing to reduce his forces into manageable dimensions, for we are told that thirty thousand men, a number far in excess of the adult male population of the city at the time, remained under arms. The king, in all appearance anxious to fulfil his pledge, set thirty clerks to work in writing out and sealing the patents of manumission. One of these, dated June 15th, is preserved in Walsingham, being that addressed to the authorities of Hertfordshire. It frees all the king's subjects in the county of bondage, and makes them quit, *i.e.*, free of any charge accruing from the past, pardons them all offences committed, and assures them of the king's peace. Hertfordshire was the county in which Walsingham's abbey, St. Albans, was situate. In these matters the king was probably advised by the Earl of Salisbury. At the same

time Richard had in his company a youth of exactly his own age, his own cousin, who was hereafter to depose him, and be the indirect instrument of his murder—Henry Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby.

On Saturday morning Tyler occupied Smithfield in force. The king was attempting to escape from London, though one can hardly see whither he would have fled, as the whole country was insurgent. He found the peasants under arms, halted at St. Bartholomew's Abbey, and prepared to parley with them. As he came near, Tyler bade his men fall back, and advanced to confer with the king. Then Tyler was slain by Walworth, the mayor, who seems to have gathered a number of partizans together, and perhaps to have made them simulate sympathy with the rebels and mingle with them. The king appeased the enraged crowd by riding up to them at the peril of his life, declaring himself their monarch and their friend. He checked Walworth and Knolles, who wished to attack them. He is said to have ordered the banners and charters of manumission to be given up, and to have destroyed whatever were surrendered; but this part of the narrative we must assuredly disbelieve. The army of the rebels returned to London, satisfied with his assurance, and soon after, for here the details of the story fail us, seems to have dispersed. But though Richard spoke them fair, he assured his counsellors, with a dissimulation which could hardly be credited in so young a person, that he would take full vengeance on them hereafter. But the longing for revenge, dissimulated by a show of patient acquiescence and even friendship, was the one steady feature in Richard's character. He returned to the Tower, and when his mother congratulated him on his safety in the evening, he told her that he had well-nigh lost and actually gained his crown on that memorable morning Before the evening he issued a proclamation, commanding the departure of all the country folk from London. We are told that the order was obeyed.

The insurrection broke out in Norwich on June 13th, under the command or guidance of Littlestreet. The captain-general of the city, Sir Robert Sale, had been born a serf,

but had risen to knighthood and an office of great trust. The insurgents invited him to join them, and offered to put a third of England under his obedience if he would consent. He refused, and fell overpowered by numbers. But they did not long retain possession of their advantages. The cathedral close and buildings at Norwich are a fortress by themselves, isolated from the rest of the city. The young and warlike Henry Spenser, one of the aristocratic prelates who were beginning to occupy the highest offices in the Church, collected an army of his retainers and others, attacked the entrenchments of the rebels by surprise, forced them, and routed the enemy. He slew many of them with his own hand, and ordered to instant execution all those who escaped the carnage and were taken prisoners. Among these was Littlestreet. A short time afterwards Spenser led an army into the Low Countries, where he was not so successful as he was in dealing with the Norfolk peasants.

If the chronicles compiled in the writing rooms of the several abbeys had all been preserved or continued (for only a portion of these annals has come down to us), we should have learned how universal the panic was, and how frequent were complaints like that which comes to us from St. Albans. The serfs who held of the monastery surrounded the abbey, and claimed an audience of the abbot. They averred that a charter had been granted long since in their favour, in which their liberties had been secured, but that this had been secreted by the monks, and they demanded that it should be surrendered to them. The abbot made promises in abundance, and ordered the seal to be affixed to the document required. But when the seal was pressed on the wax, we are told that it could not be pulled away from the impression, and the monks thereupon inferred that the patron saint of the abbey, the proto-martyr of the British Church in Roman days, was unfavourable to the demand for the emancipation of the serfs. One would like to know the serfs' account of the transaction.

The peasants' war was over in a week, if we are to trust the account given of the events. And now the authorities

began to discover the process by which the insurrection was fomented, organized, and developed. A letter of an enigmatical but sufficiently intelligible kind addressed by one Schep, formerly a priest of York, but latterly of Colchester, to the confederates was discovered and has been preserved. It speaks of John Nameless, and John the Miller, and John Carter, Piers Plowman, and John Trueman, bids them beware of guile in borough, and to stand together in God's name. Piers Plowman is to do his work, and chastise Hob the robber. The confederates are assured that the king's son in heaven shall pay for all, and the circular ends with a few lines of doggerel. Richard did not long delay his vengeance. A commission was sent into the disturbed districts, and the movers of sedition were claimed from the chief persons in the towns and villages. The culprits were hanged, some say gibbeted in chains. It is stated that fifteen hundred suffered death in the various counties. Ball was taken to prison at Coventry, condemned by Tressilian, and executed. Seven years after Tressilian was himself hanged at the instance of the Duke of Gloucester, as was also Sir Simon Burley, who had given occasion to the Kentish and Essex insurgents by imprisoning the Gravesend burgess. The rolls of Parliament give a list of the several leaders in the insurrection with a view to their being indicted. These are probably persons who had not been captured in the assize of the judges. Seventeen are set down to Norfolk, twenty (four of whom are beneficed clergymen) to Suffolk, four to Cambridge, eleven to Essex, four to Herts, twenty-three to Middlesex, one hundred and fifty one to London, eight to Winchester, twenty to Kent, eight to Sussex, eleven to Somerset, and eight to Canterbury. Most of the London leaders are craftsmen and artizans. But I conceive that the harshness with which the rioters were treated by the law did not break the spirit of the people, or make them tamely submissive to authority, as it has not at other times. The bloody assizes of Jefferies were of no little assistance to the march of William of Orange, while he was in the West of England.

Tyler, according to the judgment of his enemies (the unsuccessful leaders of insurrections have no friends), was a man of ready abilities and sound sense. He seems to have kept those who were under him in good order and discipline. He had probably seen military service, and kept a guard of picked followers about him, whom he was unwise enough to leave in the rear when he advanced to the parley in Smithfield. It is said, on the confession of some among his companions, that he intended to secure the King's person, to overset the system of feudal dependence, and to establish in its room a government of county districts, over each of which was to be put a person of like principles with himself. The monasteries would provide ample funds for these major-generals of the fourteenth century. It is curious that the scheme was that adopted in the seventeenth century by Cromwell, and shows at least that the purposes of the leaders in this insurrection were far more extensive than the remedy of mere personal wrongs, and that they contemplated even more than the extinction of services in villeinage,—a scheme, namely, for the reconstruction of English society. I admit that the confessions of criminals are always suspicious, but there is just the probability in this confession that the plan is one of singular political foresight, and could never have been invented by a foolish monk.

The Essex serfs sent certain delegates to the king, praying that the charters of manumission should be confirmed. We are told that he answered the petitioners savagely, in language which was suggested by the reply of the rash Rehoboam. The story is exceedingly improbable. It is not likely that, when the embers of insurrection were still smouldering, he would have told the serfs that he "would so order with them and their descendants that the generations to come should curse the memory of those who had provoked the insurrection." Besides, it is clear that the best of his counsellors would have gladly seen the charters confirmed by Parliament, as is proved by the authentic record of proceedings contained in the Rolls. He had, perhaps, revoked the charters of manumission. They were not legal and could not be binding. It

was and is a plain maxim of law, that no grant or remission on the part of the king could be allowed to injure another The king could remit a forfeiture, the benefit of which would accrue to the Exchequer, but not an escheat, the benefit of which might accrue to a lord. He could pardon a murderer convicted in his court by a jury summoned to try an offender against the Crown; he could not pardon a criminal, even one who had been pardoned after a first conviction, who was convicted on an appeal of blood at the instance of the nearest relative of the deceased. The charters could not be considered valid. Seventy years afterwards, when Cade's insurrection occurred, and the artifice of a promise of pardon was employed to disperse the insurgents, we are informed by Gascoigne, no mean judge of contemporary events, that Cade hesitated to take the proffered pledge on the ground that it needed the confirmation of Parliament.

Parliament met on Sept. 16th, and the situation was immediately put before it. The Treasurer, Sir Hugh Segrave, informs the Commons that "the king had been forced to grant the insurgents letters patent under the Great Seal, enfranchising to a considerable extent those who were only bond servants and villeins of the realm, for which the king, knowing it to be against law, directs them to seek remedy and provide for the confirmation or revocation thereof. If they desire to enfranchise and manumit their villeins by common consent, he will assent to it." The answer given unanimously is, "That all grants of liberties and manumission to the said villeins and bond tenants, obtained by force, are in disherison of them, the Lords and Commons, and to the destruction of the realm, and therefore null and void;" and they add, that "this consent they would never give to save themselves from perishing all together in one day."

Language such as the above, employed by the king or his councillors; suggestions so generous as those proposed to the Commons by the Crown, and, I may add, so much in accordance with the policy of the Government afterwards, are inconsistent with the threats and reproaches which Walsingham puts in the mouth of Richard a few weeks

before. We know that the policy of the Government was by no means unfriendly to the emancipation of the serfs, that every construction which lawyers could put upon usage or statute was favourable to their freedom, and that in after years the king put his veto on those petitions of the Commons by which he is entreated to impose social disabilities on the condition of villeinage. Thus in 1391, ten years after the insurrection, the king declines to accede to the request that the sons of serfs should not be allowed to frequent the universities, or to listen to the complaint that "they fly to cities and boroughs and are there harboured, and that the lord, on attempting to recover his serf, is hindered by the people." The Commons suggest in their prayer that the lord should be allowed the remedy of allowing the serf to be seized without regard to the franchise of the place in which he has taken refuge.

In singular contrast to this outbreak, and yet to some extent in harmony with its temper, is an account of an outrage committed by the Mayor of Cambridge, one Lystere, and four of the bailiffs of the same town, on April 30th, 1381, some six weeks before Tyler's outbreak. These officials of the city were dissatisfied with the charters granted to the University. So they set on the University authorities, compelled them to deliver up all charters conferring franchises and privileges on the students, which they burnt on the spot, and further constrained them to execute a formal renunciation of all their rights by an instrument under their common seal. The citizens for this outrage were fined 101 marks. The act was certainly not so alarming as the insurrection of the peasants, and did not portend such serious consequences; and the penalty was, perhaps, even for a town of nearly three thousand inhabitants at this time, light; but it shows that passionate demonstrations against privileges or usurpations were not confined to the lower orders, but were encouraged even among the burgesses of an east county town. Cambridge was probably at this time, like its neighbour counties, strongly leavened with those doctrines of equality which the poor priests had been preaching.

The peasants were dispersed and defeated; their leaders were tried, sentenced, and hanged; but the solid fruits of victory rested with the insurgents of June 1381. It may have been the case that the discontent was too widespread. The peril had been so great, and the success of the insurrection was so near, that wise men saw it was better to silently grant that which they stoutly refused in Parliament to concede. It has always been so, and, until social man has solved every problem, an impossible Utopia, it always will be the case that wise men counsel concession when the less far-sighted clamour for resistance. The history of the English Parliament is full of examples, instructive in the highest degree, of the fact. There have been constantly persons who affirm that the grant of the commonest justice will bring about "that they all will perish in one day," as the Commons of 1381 predicted, when the English landowners were in the most grievous strait that has ever occurred in their history. It is true that in the great majority of cases, and till comparatively recent times, the efforts of those who have led the way in reform have been directed towards the maintenance of those public liberties from which, in the nature of things, the wealthy and well-to-do reap more benefit than the poor and the anxious. This is not, indeed, to be regretted, for till liberty and equal law are granted to all, the amendment of the poor man's lot is indefinitely postponed, though, when that earliest justice is done, the righting of other wrongs may be remote, but is within the ken of the true statesman. When wreck was made of Parliamentary institutions in the great war of the English Succession, and a despotism, not, indeed, absolute, but therefore more dangerous, was induced over every part of an Englishman's life, except his memory, it took two centuries and a half before even the shadow of the fifteenth-century Parliament was restored. Since that time, we of this generation and our fathers have been striving for fifty years to secure some of those acts of justice and wisdom which are essential to the well-being, the progress, the moral health of our countrymen. If any one were to collect the predictions which have been uttered as to the certain ruin

of our institutions and our fortunes should this or that be conceded; if one were to narrate the intrigues, to expose the falsehoods, to unravel the diplomacy, to reveal the hypocrisy, to excuse the timidity of those who have resisted wholesome change, we should be telling the history of the English Parliament for the last fifty years. Liberty and property, the two conditions of social order, have been invoked as names, by those who know nothing of any liberty but their own privilege to do wrong, and no property but that which custom has allowed them to appropriate and fence.

It would not be difficult for one to exhibit in modern argument the defence of serfage and the attack on the institution, for the slight echoes which have come to us from the strife of tongues in 1381 are no way different, except in the faintness of the sound, from those which are ringing loudly in our memories five centuries later. The advocates of the old order would allege, that "on the foundations of submission had grown up marvellously noble institutions, a beautified land, full of handsome churches, served by a devout and faithful priesthood, whose labours were supplemented by the prayers of holy and religious monks, within whose cloisters the young of all classes are taught and promoted, and the annals of the kingdom are faithfully transcribed. The country is embellished with noble castles, not now an offence, but a protection; and every parish has its manor-house, in which justice is done, agriculture is fostered, and the ancient institutions of England are maintained. The owners of these possessions feed the hungry, give employment to the needy, a career to the active and bold. When the heir of the ancestral house comes of age, the country side is feasted, and the salt is put below the tenants of the lordship and the manors. It may be the case that, in some degree, we live by the earnings of our tenants, but we have made the name of England terrible in Palestine and Egypt, in Sicily and Spain, and have overthrown the proudest chivalry of Europe. Is it nothing that the English king has been offered the imperial crown, and that we hold the balance of power in Europe; that the king's eldest uncle is the rightful king of Spain, as our king is the

rightful heir of France, in the just recovery of which he will imitate the deeds of his glorious father and grandfather? Take from us, who have been the pioneers of England's greatness, the means by which we can maintain the traditions of the race, and England will be the last of nations, as she has been the first. If we do not hold our grip upon what we possess, and regain what we should possess, our supremacy is gone, our place in the councils of Europe will be forgotten, and trade will desert the flag to which we fail to rally. Besides, it is the lot of the poor to labour, and their duty to be patient."

On the other hand, it might be alleged that "contracts must not be one-sided, but equitable; that they should be, in the interests of all, faithfully kept by both parties; that the peasant, who has improved his holding at his own cost, cannot safely, without wrecking the real fortunes of the people, be discouraged from that trial which, one way or other, continues and adds to the wealth of the nation; that discontent, fostered by unjust dealing, is more dangerous than any foreign foe; and that in no case should the misfortunes of one class be made a pretext for wronging all others. All have suffered, they might continue, from a grievous visitation. There is no home in England which does not mourn its losses. Is it wrong that the survivors should make the best of their condition; or, at least, is it not reasonable that they should enjoy the fruits of those agreements which you have voluntarily, and in what appeared to be your interests, extended? The effects of the calamity will pass away, and you will find that your difficulties will be also transient. Besides, you have another remedy. Your ancestors founded those lordships which opulent abbots possess. Valuable as their prayers may be, it was never intended that those prayers should be endowed so richly as to reduce the kingdom to penury. These holy men have a third of the land of England in fee. They were far holier when they were poorer. English honour and English power could be supported abroad by a portion of their superfluities, and, if the worst comes, knights and nobles enough could be maintained on the lands of the monks. The poor priests went too far, but they have been chastised. Those

who took up arms have been dispersed. But you will never break the spirit of an Englishman, and it is far better to drop that which you cannot justly claim and you could not safely exact." I can imagine a Salisbury of the Montacute race arguing in this fashion, if not publicly, yet earnestly in private or in the lobbies; and I can easily conceive an unanimous vote against that which, a short time afterwards, would be churlishly granted, or more wisely conceded in silence. For in those times *le Roy s'avisera* meant the opposition of the Government.

That the claims of the serfs were conceded, or, if you please, the claims of the landlords were dropped, is absolutely certain. The Parliament cried "No surrender!" in September, and began to surrender immediately. "Snap resolutions" were no doubt made ten years or less afterwards, but the Government evaded them, and declined to give effect to the petition, as they called it in those days, convinced that matters would turn out better than malcontents and reactionaries imagined. The custom of commuting the old labour rents for money payments became universal; the serfs became copyholders, and the insurrection of Tyler, once a terrible memory, became in the later annals the mere outbreak of a mob, which had been stirred to indignation by a brutal tax-gatherer, or an insurrection of frantic communism, or, as one of our later philosophers has described it, "The outcome of an age in which social inequality was over keenly felt." The wiser contemporaries of the movement agreed to abandon its provocations, and consign it to oblivion or misconception.

But the Court and the Government could not forgive the Lollards. They drove them from Oxford, and threatened to extinguish the University itself, unless they were suppressed. In appearance Oxford submitted. It displaced the Lollard chancellor, and elected one of Wiklif's colleagues at Bruges. The preachers were silenced, which means that they were rendered cautious. Many went across the sea, and spread the new Gospel of the Bible-men to the furthest confines of the Christian world. Some recanted, and became bishops, cardinals, and persecutors. But many remained. You cannot

meet, said one of the monkish historians, five people talking together, but three of them are Lollards. The Archbishop of Canterbury, who was noble, orthodox, and treasonable, said that there were wild vines in the University, and therefore little grapes; that tares are constantly sown among the pure wheat, and that the whole University is leavened with heresy. Nor do I doubt that when Henry IV. came to the throne, he still remembered the scene in Smithfield, and putting cause and effect together, though he had no ill-will to the country-folk, to whom he conceded the largest franchise, a franchise not yet restored, that he had little love to the Lollard priests, and readily put the duty on the sheriffs in boroughs and mayors in towns of burning such heretics as the clergy had handed over to the secular arm.

Two inferences beyond these which fall within the domain of ordinary politics can be gathered from the causes which preceded the outbreak of 1381, and from the consequences which ensued after the storm was over. One of them has often been noticed, the other I think rarely, if ever.

1. The success of a religious movement has generally, if not invariably, been associated with a movement for improving the moral and secular advantage of those whom it seeks to benefit. In this permanent condition lies the difference between a superstition and a religion, between the slavery and the freedom of dogmas. The teachings of Buddha and Zoroaster, of Christianity and of Islam, are based on the principles of freedom, of the giving liberty to the captives, of the opening of the prison to them that have been bound. They invariably contain the doctrine of the equality of man, if not before the secular ruler, at least in the sight of God, and for the saving of men's souls, and have as regularly been a reaction or protest against tenets which are intended to serve limited interests. It is possible to carry out what you may call a reformation, an entire and wholesale purification or abscission of dogmas, but if in the end it is felt or seen that the process is merely intended to serve the functions of government, or to bolster up an existing order, or to control personal but devout freedom, it never commands sympathy

and never has a lasting influence. It has over and over again been the fate of national churches, created in what seemed to be the interests of order, to fade gradually out of all living reality, and to become extinct forms. The institution may be useful, it may be respectable, it may from time to time become the rallying ground of vehement party spirit, but it never becomes the inner life of its disciple, the object of his existence. This is curiously illustrated in the history of Scotch Presbyterianism, for certain reasons the most national of religions, and its numerous sects.

Now Lollardy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was a religion which associated itself directly with the moral and material interests of its disciples. It was probably sour and opinionative. It certainly made no scruple in scoffing at and insulting the State creed, and in the few records we have of the doings of these poor and obscure sectaries, the fact is noted. "All the Lollards," says one chronicler, "hated images; they even called the image of our Lady at Lincoln, the witch of Lincoln." One of the poor priests is said to have lighted the fire at the lepers' chapel at Leicester with an image of St. Catherine. A number of these Lollards cut down the crucifix in the parish of Westcheam, tied it to the tails of horses, and threw it into a sewer at Kingston-on-Thames. Very likely persecution bred hatred and outrage. But these sectaries inculcated those virtues of social life which among active men give a solid earnest of religious hope. The Lollard would sacrifice his worldly possessions, even his life, to his creed; but while he was allowed or permitted to cherish his creed, or his creed escaped detection, he did not disdain the assistance which his religion gave him towards prosperity in his calling. Hence they were thought to be disaffected men, who wanted an opportunity, but had no excuse for wishing it.

2. Such political movements as are organized and developed with any hope of effecting their object ultimately and permanently are always the outcome of times in which prosperity, or at least relative comfort, is general. The forces of society always make easy work of the outbreak

which despair sometimes instigates. The Jacquerie in France, the Peasants' War in Germany, were desperate efforts, ferocious reprisals, but futile struggles. The years which preceded the Peasants' War in England were times of high wages and low prices. The means of life were abundant, the earnings of the labourer exceptionally great. The teachings of the poor priests were addressed to men whose prospects were far higher than those of their fathers, whose opportunities were greater and more immediate than those of their remote descendants. What is the use of preaching social equality to the indigent and miserable? How can men combine and organize when their one thought is for their daily bread, and that is only secure for the day? The message of Wiklif's priests would have seemed a mockery to the destitute. How can the starving contend for their rights? The overmastering sense of a struggle for bare life leaves no room for any other thought. I am persuaded that the most remarkable religious movement of which we have accurate and continuous information, that of Wesley, with its unlimited sympathy and easily attainable optimism, would have fallen on deaf ears in other times than those of the extraordinary plenty which marked the first half of the eighteenth century, and agriculture became a favourite calling. But this plenty was as nothing to the golden times of the fifteenth, when the earth brought forth by handsful, and the yeomanry were planted in England.

Once in the history of England only, once, perhaps, only in the history of the world, peasants and artizans attempted to effect a revolution by force. They nearly succeeded; at least they became, for a short time, the masters of the situation. That they would have held the advantages they gained at Mile End, had they provided against the tragedy of Smithfield, is improbable. But they caused such terror by what they actually did, that they gained all that they claimed, and that speedily. The English labourer, for a century or more, became virtually free and constantly prosperous. The machinery with which they began their efforts still existed.

I have no doubt that the services which the poor priests, Bible-men, and Lollard preachers had done in and after the great crisis of 1381, is the explanation, in some degree at least, of the passionate persistence with which Lollard tenets were secretly cherished during the whole of the fifteenth century. It was due to the fact that the upland folk and the village artizans favoured, protected, and concealed an organization which was reputed to be hostile to the rights of property, that the influential laity at the beginning of this century made no serious demur to the unconstitutional statute under which convicted heretics were, after trial in the spiritual courts, handed over for execution to the secular authorities, who were compelled to carry out the decrees of the bishops and their deputies. That this statute would have been rescinded if it had not been conceived supremely useful is, I am convinced, certain, if one takes account of what the temper of the English laity was at the time. But the working classes identified the Lollard teachers with their emancipation in the past and their progress in the present. It is known, obscure as the annals of fifteenth-century Lollardy are, that one of the most audacious of these preachers laboured long in his calling, and so constantly eluded his persecutors that he seemed to bear a charmed life. William White, who had for years preached in Norfolk, disguised and hidden by the weavers, was at last captured in 1427, and burnt at Norwich. He left successors to his teaching, who were as much trouble, more than a century later, to Somerset and Cranmer as he and his had been to Bedford and Chicheley. But what was a disservice and a danger to property, was a service and a security to labour. The villagers and craftsmen whispered the names of those men with respect and affection whom the landowners and the clergy had proscribed. They hid them in the day of peril, though their means of concealment must have been imperfect, just as they secreted those fragments of the Bible and their comments on its teaching which seemed to them to be the irreversible charter of their liberties and of their hopes.

They who have discussed the history of religious movements in England have discovered in the vigorous courage of those who began and continued the Puritan movement in England, immediately after the Reformation, and especially that early off-shoot from it, the Independent or Congregational organization, nothing but the influence of Genevan experiences in the exiles of the Marian persecution. To my mind, and in the light of what I have read, this explanation is quite insufficient, though I can readily allow it a proper force. Geneva would have produced little fruit in the minds of the better off peasantry and the artizans unless it had found the soil already prepared by the teaching of Lollardy. Wiklif is infinitely more the father of English Protestantism than Cromwell and Cranmer, Parker and Grindal were. There is a saying that Cambridge bred the founders of the English Reformation, and Oxford burnt them. There is a grain of truth in the statement. The English Reformation took root in the minds of the people in the Eastern Counties not because State Anglicanism was developed in the younger University, but because for nearly a couple of centuries the poor priests of Wiklif's school had pursued their obscure but effectual labours in the east of England, and had familiarized the minds of men with an organization which was first bitterly hostile to Rome, and afterwards as irreconcilable with Canterbury

CHAPTER X.

THE LANDLORD'S REMEDIES.

The Changed State of Affairs—The Currency—The Meaning of Changes in it—The Supervision of the Exchanges—Leases an early Phenomenon, but Occasional—Land and Stock Leases—Their Analogy to Métairie—How it was a Necessity to all Parties—Analysis of such a Lease, and Statement of its Profits—Duration of the System—Continued by Religious Houses—Distress, Law of—The Insurance of the Tenants' Stock—Rise of the Value of Land in the Fifteenth Century—The Estate of Lord Cromwell—The Purchase of Copyholds by Persons of Position—Fastolfe's Trade with Flanders—The Opulence of the Fifteenth Century manifested by its Churches—Effects of Ordinary Leases and Yearly Tenancies on Primogeniture, on the Profits of the Farmer—The Younger Son—The Extension of Entails and Trusts—The Charge of the Younger Son on the Public Funds—Peculiarities in the Early Leases—Freeholds for Life—The Long Leases of Corporations—The Profits of Woods—The Corn Rents of the Eastern Counties.

THE old system of cultivation by the capitalist landlord was hopelessly doomed. Wages were rising, profits and prices were falling. During the twenty years between 1371 and 1390 the labourer was engaged in stereotyping his new rate of remuneration, and during the best part of a generation had accustomed himself to a scale of living and saving, which was far in excess of previous experience. During the last twenty years of the fourteenth century, the price of corn was greatly below the average, though it must be allowed that, when compared with the twenty years to which reference has so often been made, labour was a little cheaper. The fact is, a new class of farmers had become, or was fast becoming, the employers of labour,—those who were occupiers on a lease, and such persons were capable of striking a harder bargain in the open market than the old capitalist landowner was. The rate of wages is always lower when the principal employers are

small tenant farmers, if the number of labourers seeking for work and wages is considerable enough to compete against each other for employment. An Irish labourer gets very poor wages from an Irish farmer, an American farm hand gets good wages from an American occupier. But the reason is that the labourers are many in the former case, the employment scanty, and the bargain hard. In the latter the field labourers are comparatively few, and, in consequence, the labourer is often better off than the small farmer. In fourteenth and fifteenth-century England, the labourer was not indeed poorly paid ; far from it, but had it been possible for the old system to have continued, he would have been better off than he was under that which succeeded to the old.

The price of live stock was stationary. There is hardly a sensible difference between the old rates at which farm stock is sold, and those at which it changes hands during the last twenty years of the fourteenth century. On the whole, the rate rather declines than rises ; for we must remember that as landlord farming passes away, the record becomes one of consumable rather than of store stock, which it largely was at first, because the evidence of market values is chiefly that supplied by purchasers. The price of wool is still that of production, and is slightly lower. Dairy products are a little cheaper. The other articles which were essential to the conduct of husbandry are even dearer ; such, for instance, as iron. Fifty years had elapsed since the Great Plague, and the habitually adverse balance on the producer's side of the account, and there was no prospect that the conditions would be altered. The same facts apply to agricultural implements, to the various materials used for building, and, in short, to all articles which, being produced by labour and sold to the best purchaser, could command the market price without restraint.

I am quite aware that the weight of the silver penny was reduced by about ten per cent., *i.e.*, from 22½ grains to 20 grains during the century. But it is also clear that if the lessening of the weight in the coin effected, as it would seem natural that it should, a rise in prices, it ought to have had the effect all round. But we find that the price of food is

lessened ; while in the price of labour, and all articles whose value is related to labour only, by which I mean in which there was no element of rent or profit against which the tendency to rise would operate, there is a rise which is wholly disproportionate to, and in excess of, the lessening of the silver unit. Whatever effect, then, the action of the mint might have had, or however much the concurrent circulation of gold, either of foreign origin or of English mintage, should have had an effect on the price of silver, it is plain that it did not produce the result of heightening prices all round. The ingenious explanation, then, of Adam Smith, that silver was gradually becoming scarcer,—a conclusion he arrived at by noticing, in the very scanty evidence which was supplied him, a constantly decreasing price of food, and the principal necessaries of private life—is untenable, as Smith would himself have declared had information as to the wages of labour during this period been in his possession.

The English government was keenly alive to the risk which it imagined that it ran from the depletion of the precious metals. In the interpretation of the painful problem before them, though the English landowners set sufficient importance on the factor which was represented by the enhanced rate of wages, they are willing enough to believe that the scarcity of silver increased the mischief. Long before the trouble came, however, the king established, in 1335, the office of the King's Exchequer, appointing William de la Pole, a Hull and London merchant, to the office, with the duty of superintending the import and export of the precious metals at the various staples. In the same reign, but shortly afterwards, the offence of coining and clipping was made high treason, and I cannot believe that Parliament, which was keenly awake to grievances, would have quietly acquiesced in the reduction of the penny by ten per cent. if the value of the piece had been, as we conclude it would have been, sensibly diminished, or the older and heavier coins had disappeared, as they should have done, and it appears did not.

It would be a long and tedious business to state the arguments which have persuaded me that from the earliest

times till after the issue of base money under Henry VIII., payments in England were not made by tale but by weight, and that consequently it was of no great importance that the size of the piece should be uniform or continuous. I do not affirm that my reasons are entirely conclusive, for they lack the proof of direct evidence, but the circumstances are so probable, and the facts are so inexplicable on any other interpretation, that I feel myself compelled to conclude in the manner which I have indicated. I cannot conceive that for the temporary advantage which the fraud of reducing the weight would have given, the Crown would have committed the extraordinary folly of reducing the whole of its revenue which was derived from fixed sources, and represented by fixed payments for ever, or that the most patient and the most supine body of landowners, and such the nobles, knights, and gentry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were certainly not, would have acquiesced in the permanent and irreversible reduction of all their dues and rents.

For many years before the Great Plague, landowners had been occasionally in the habit of letting land on lease. If the estate were too distant for convenient access, it was found advisable to adopt this expedient. Thus Merton College possessed estates in the counties of Durham and Northumberland, the latter having been a gift to the founder of the college by Edmond of Lancaster. At first the college cultivated these estates with its own capital and under the supervision of its own bailiffs, as Lancaster had done before them. But the place was very distant, and could not be brought under that constant supervision of the owner which the bailiff system required. Again, the estate was near the border, and constantly liable to be overrun. Fraudulent bailiffs were not unknown, and it would have been easy to magnify or even invent a loss. Hence the college determined, at a very early date, to lease these lands. Sometimes, again, the owner succeeded to, or purchased, an estate in which the lease of the whole manor, under the ordinary process of granting perpetual tenancies at fixed rents, had been already effected—a system in which the commutation of labour for money was a

necessity, since the labour rent could have been turned to no account if the lord had no land in his own hands. Sometimes the owner, for reasons of his own, which it is now impossible to discover, granted a lease of lands which, under ordinary circumstances, he had cultivated himself, to some tenant for a varying term of years, and when the term was over, resumed the property, and resumed the old system of bailiff cultivation with the landlord's capital. I have already illustrated this practice. It takes place in property near as well as remote, and was probably due either to the fact that the landlord had advantageous offers, or it was difficult to find a sufficiently trustworthy bailiff, or because the landowner was suffering from some temporary straitening of his circumstances, and was glad to avoid a large immediate outlay and unproductive arrears, for the arrears which were necessarily in the hands of the bailiff were often very considerable. Occasionally these leases were long, thirty years or more. Sometimes they were short, for five or seven. Sometimes the lord would let the arable land and retain the pasture, especially if he kept stock, and determined on a sheep, cattle, or horse-breeding farm ; for it is clear that the supervision of a stock farm would need beyond what was sunk in the stock, a less working capital, and should represent fewer arrears.

The abandonment of landlord cultivation takes place at various times after the plague. This is partly due to the conservative feeling of certain proprietors, who struggled against the change, hoping things would mend, or that they should get cheaper labour, or that they might find Acts of Parliament and royal ordinances efficacious. Sometimes it would seem that in cases where the landowners—in this case a corporation of an ecclesiastical or quasi-ecclesiastical kind —were possessed of tithes as well as land, or land held with tithe as part of the ecclesiastical endowment, they kept the system up because it was difficult to separate the tithe and the lay estate, or because they found it all but impossible to find a lessee. In the end they generally granted a lease of the tithes to their vicar, and as generally, also, on very

advantageous terms,—so advantageous occasionally as in some degree to make the impropriation little more than a moderate rent charge. But everything goes at last, and the tenant farmer takes the place of the landlord. The last *bonâ fide* cultivation of the old kind that I have seen is in 1433-4; and here I suspect that the amount of land held by the lord had been considerably cut down before the residue was leased. Sometimes it is true that the corporation retained home farms in its hands. Battle and Sion Abbeys do so up to the beginning of the sixteenth century.

When, during the prevalence of the old system, a landlord occasionally let his lands to farm, he invariably let his stock, live and dead, with them. The stock—never quite as copious as during the landlord's occupation, and, to judge from the valuation assigned to it, never of so high a quality—was carefully recorded on the lease which the tenant and landlord executed, and as regularly entered on the back of the tenant's roll of account, for such tenants rendered audit annually, just as the old bailiffs did, and had to exhibit their stock to the collector or steward. It is probable that at the creation of one of these stock and land leases the landowner disposed of the household effects and the best of the herd and flock, leaving only such a quantity as the tenant would take, or would find necessary in order to supplement the deficiency of his own capital. The landlord generally leases along with the live and dead stock a certain amount of seed corn, occasionally corn for wages and food. All this the tenant covenants to restore at the conclusion of his time in good condition, reasonable depreciation excepted, at a fixed price for every quarter of corn, head of cattle, sheep, and poultry, with the assessed value of the dead stock left on the farm. As I have said, the valuation is generally low.

Now in the old times, the stock and land lease, as it had its occasional utility to the landlord and its necessity to the tenant, was also an inevitable arrangement for the landlord. Such a lease was essentially a temporary bargain. The landlord always might, and generally did, contemplate the resumption of his estate and its renewed cultivation under

the old capitalist landlord system. To have got entirely rid of his stock would have made it difficult for him to resume his old relations. He might have wished, when he called in his arrears, and either exacted his debts or wrote them off as irrecoverable, to put himself in funds by the sale of his best or superfluous stock. But he would not entirely abandon the means of renewing, perhaps under more favourable conditions, the advantageous and profitable system which was so general.

There was, indeed, one kind of stock leasing which was of immemorial antiquity,—that of letting cows to dairy farmers. It was exceedingly common in the middle ages,—so common that it was the rule on many estates; and thus the records of dairy produce are frequently absent from such estates as kept considerable herds of cattle. It endured longer than any custom which was handed down from the middle ages, for it is constantly referred to by Arthur Young, not only as a practice but as an index of profit on good pastures. In the older agriculture, the lessee of the cows, sometimes of the oxen, is the deye, *i.e.*, the dairyman or maid, and the fact bears testimony to the growth of property among those who had belonged to the servile classes.

The new stock and land lease was generally for a short period, from seven to ten years. The advantage of this was obvious, not that the lord was likely to get better terms, but that he had better security for the due return of his stock at the end of the period. The lord always covenants to keep the buildings in repair, for in this the lessee on a term differed from the tenant on a fee farm rent; but he also stipulated to insure the tenant against the losses by murrain in his sheep, the word used generically for all diseases which are fatal to animals. On the other hand, the tenant took the risks of scab, which the farriery of the time conceived to be curable by proper precautions and remedies. The risk was not trivial, though it imposed a minimum loss on the tenant. The maximum which the tenant had to bear appears to have been ten per cent. of the stock; and the landlord frequently had to compensate him to the extent of twenty per cent. more. Besides this the landlord was expected to assist the tenant,

either when the price of corn was very low, or when the farmer had suffered serious losses in his own harvest or in the quality of his crops. In short, the landlord learnt early that he had to submit to part of those casualties which the tenant affirmed that he had endured, for under a stock and land lease the amount of goods on which the landlord could distrain was necessarily limited to the tenant's crops and property.

Adam Smith (Book III. chap. ii.) saw that such a form of tenure as that which I have described must have existed in England at some period between that in which the small tenancies in villeinage existed, and the holdings of tenant farmers cultivating land with stock of their own commenced. He compares it to the metayer tenancy, which in his time prevailed, and for a much longer time, which probably prevails now in Southern France and Northern Italy. It differs from *métairie* in the fact (1) that it was essentially a temporary expedient, (2) that the rent was open to periodical adjustment, *i.e.*, was not a fixed quantity, and (3) that the stock was valued to the tenant, and had to be restored by him on the determination of the lease. A metayer tenancy is a virtual partnership between landowner and tenant, by which, in consideration of certain advances of stock made and renewed, the landowner receives a certain share of the produce, whatever the amount may be. In the land and stock lease, the tenant, subject to the regular insurance and the occasional help alluded to above, took his chance of the seasons and the markets, and made what he could by his land. We are told by Adam Smith that even in his time such farmers existed in Scotland, under the name of steel bow tenants. They had a much shorter existence in England, for they had passed away so completely, and had become so much a matter of distant tradition, that the law-writers of modern times who commented on them entirely misunderstood their meaning.

The stock and land lease was a necessity to both landlord and tenant, but it was an advantage to both. It enabled the latter to increase his holding, his margin of profit, his savings,

and to become either a tenant with his own capital, or the purchaser of freehold or copyhold estate for himself. It is plain that the former must have been the result of the system, or the capitalist tenant would never have been developed. It is equally clear that the latter was no infrequent consequence, or we should not see how very large the number of the freeholders was in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. An occupying freeholder of eighty acres with rights of common was, if we may conclude from the rent rolls and manor records, in the fourteenth century and earlier, a comparatively rare personage; in the fifteenth he becomes numerous enough to form the basis of a new political system, and in the seventeenth he gives that system solidity and strength. That this tenant made the best bargain he possibly could with the landlord we may be quite sure; that he was not slow to take advantage of the landlord's necessities, to get stock at the lowest possible rate, and to exaggerate his losses in fold and market, we may be also quite certain; but it is even more certain that he was thriving, and that the business of the agriculturist was eminently profitable in the fifteenth century. In about seventy years, with rare exceptions, land which is hitherto let on the stock and land system is turned into the holding of an ordinary capitalist tenant farmer. It was naturally kept up longest where the landlords were the easiest, and it is noted that the practice continued with some of the monastic lands to the time of the Reformation, as we find from the sales of monastic chattels, the accounts of which are preserved in the Record Office. These show by the prices at which the stock is sold that they were either forced sales, or that great allowances were made to the tenants in purchasing them.

We are fortunately able to determine what the profit of a stock and land lease was to the landowner. I have printed in my third volume of the "History of Agriculture and Prices" (pages 705-8), the stock on a farm let on a land and stock lease at Alton Barnes, in Wilts, in the year 1455, and at a rental of £14.

The farm contains the manor and domain lands, except

meadows and pasture at the manor. It is said, at the end of the account, to amount to 108 acres of the second ploughing, of which 44 have been composted by sheep. The tenant has, however, been for some time in possession of the tenancy. The stock is corn, live stock and dead stock, most of the live stock and some of the dead being valued. The corn will be taken at market prices near the locality, where it is very cheap, and the few other articles which are not valued will be estimated. It is to be observed that the quantity of corn left on the estate is far in excess of any requirements of seed, and is to be interpreted as a stock for the exigencies of the year, from Michaelmas to Michaelmas, just as under the old bailiff farming a considerable amount of corn and stock is treated as working capital independently of the arrears. The collector of rents has arrears in his hand, the particulars of which are not given. The amount, however, proves that the collector had succeeded some one who is very remiss. The arrears amount to £13 11*s.* 2*d.* The rents of assize are £5 10*s.* 8*d.* The farmer's rent is £14, and the collector's total liabilities are £32 1*s.* 10*d.* He is allowed for void and excused holdings 19*s.* 11*d.*; and in external expenses, including his own fee of 5*s.* 6*d.*, 7*s.* 8*d.* The warden's visit to the manor involves a cost of 4*s.* 4½*d.* He pays £25 6*s.* 10*d.* in two sums to his employers. The college allows the farmer £2 4*s.* 5½*d.* off his arrears, on the ground that his farm for previous years has yielded unsatisfactory crops. He pays £20 rent and arrears in part, a further allowance of £2 being made for this year, and acknowledges a liability of £1 18*s.* 7*d.*

Now the corn which the tenant takes over is worth, at the nearest place in Wilts, £11 8*s.* 6½*d.*; the live stock, five horses, eleven oxen, a bull, three cows, two heifers, and two yearlings, are valued at £13 2*s.* 4*d.*; the sheep, 571 (it is specially a sheep farm, with extensive hill pastures, long since enclosed), at £39 9*s.* 6*d.*; the rest of the live stock at 15*s.* 4*d.*; and the whole live stock is, therefore, valued at £64 15*s.* 4½*d.* The dead stock, which partly is priced, is put at £3 15*s.* 2*d.* There are, however, a large number of other articles which the tenant takes over under the same conditions, and

the whole amounts to £68 10*s.* 6½*d.* To this must be added the purchase value of the land, which at 6*d.* an acre rent and twenty years' purchase, the ordinary payment for unstocked land, and the purchase value of land at or about the time that the lease was delivered, brings the capital value of the holding, land, and stock, up to £122 10*s.* 6½*d.* Here I must also add the unvalued dead stock. Besides ordinary farm implements, ploughs, rakes, prongs, hoes, a sickle, a scythe, wood-hooks, and similar articles, it comprises a brass cover and basin, a brass four-gallon pot, a spit weighing 20 lb., and 20 lb. of raw iron for repairing the ploughs. We shall deal fairly with the sum total if we raise it to £125, by including the value of these articles.

I have taken the prices nearest the estate. They are very low this year. Wheat is only 4*s.*, barley 2*s.* 4*d.*, pulse 2*s.*, and oats 1*s.* 8*d.* a quarter. I think it would be reasonable, in estimating what was in the mind of the owner when he made his bargain with his tenant (especially as he allows him a considerable sum in consequence of unremunerative prices), to take better prices. The average of the decade in the midst of which this year stands would raise the corn prices £5 higher, and the tenant would thus be paying a little under eleven per cent. of its capital value for a land and stock farm in the middle of the fifteenth century. It is true that the landowner is still under a risk. By the terms of his agreement, the tenant is to restore every article enumerated in his holding in good condition,—the corn in the quantities specified, the live stock similarly,—the landlord having the right to claim their pecuniary valuation at his discretion. In theory the owner's property is therefore indestructible. But the following clause is inserted in the document after the enumeration and assessment of the sheep :—"And be it known that if the wethers (284) die of common murrain in a year to the number of 28 or less, the ewes (160) to the number of 16 or less, the hoggs (120) to the number of 12 or less, the farmer shall bear the loss himself. But whatever die in excess of these numbers, the landlord shall bear the loss of them." The landlord, therefore, guarantees his tenant in

all loss of sheep over ten per cent. This was no slight contingency. Three years before the landlord paid on 46, seven years before on 116, eight years before on 63. These charges would reduce the rent payable materially.

In the year 1530, the same person, one John Benger, is at once farmer and rent collector, as Richard Benger, his father, had been in 1484. The land and stock lease is still in operation, for his arrears are limited to the stock, and his indebtedness at the end of the year is also said to be the stock. His rent is now £15 10*s.* and a quarter of oats. But his tenancy now includes the meadow, pasture, and close of the manor house, which appear to have been excluded in the lease of 1455. The rents of assize are 5*s.* 4*d.* less than they were 75 years previously, but just the same as they were 46 years before. Considering that the tenant has now a fair quantity of meadow land, we may conclude that there is no appreciable rise in the rental of this farm for three-quarters of a century. The clause of insurance is not inserted in the subsequent accounts, but neither are the particulars of the stock. They had undoubtedly been continued on this hypothetical basis of indestructibility with the condition previously stated during this very lengthened period.

So prolonged a land and stock lease is, however, very exceptional, at least in such accounts as I have seen, and these amount to many thousands. In the great majority of cases the land is ultimately let for short terms. Thus, in an estate belonging to the same proprietors with that which I have described above, and in Oxfordshire, the three manors contained within the parish, or within the range of the collector's labours, are severally let, one for a term of ten years, the other two for a year certain only. In the last two cases the farmer takes the rents of the other tenants, *i.e.*, stipulates as part of the tenure which he has to guarantee to the landlord his rents of assize for the term. The lessee of the third manor lands does not undertake the collection of the rent. They pay £8 13*s.* 4*d.*, £12., and £16 respectively. It is impossible to separate the particulars of these holdings, for the dimensions of farms since the days of enclosures no way

correspond with their ancient limits. They have been quoted partly to show that leases on terms and for a year certain were familiar, and also for another cause.

The rent could not be levied, or in case of default, the tenant could not be distrained, unless the precise ground from which the rent or service issued was known and defined. This perpetually reappears, for instance, in the Oxfordshire account before me. "There is a deficiency of 28*s.* 2*d.* in the rents of divers customary tenants, because one does not know from what lands and tenements to levy them." "Seven capons should come from tenants there, and one does not know whence to collect them." "There is a particular field called 'Matchyngbernys,' but the rent is not forthcoming, amounting to £1 6*s.* 8*d.*, because we do not know what land to distrain on." But the list of arrears is far more formidable. "There is a sum of £56 13*s.* 4*d.*, an arrear of 95 years, and we do not know what to distrain on." Collectors make default, nine of them successively in the collective amount of £86 9*s.* 10*d.* Two of the farmers make default, or are in arrears, to a sum which is over £50, while the whole value of this very considerable estate appears to amount to £102 4*s.* 6*d.*

I have referred to these particulars, tedious and technical though they may seem to be, because they illustrate the difficulties in which the landlord was put. If he had a tenant farmer on a stock and land lease, he was perpetually called on to put his hand in his pocket, for repairs, for trade losses, and for what were called in these days, as well as in ours, times of agricultural distress, "*debilitas annorum.*" If, on the other hand, he leased his land without stock, he had to be exceedingly careful with his terriers and his rentals, in order to secure his remedy of distress, and he ran the risk after all of dishonest agents and defaulting tenants. That circulation of capital which involves competition for occupancies was certainly in its infancy, if, indeed, it were known at all. Except as a purchaser, and then he would prefer his place of birth, the occupying farmer was very unlikely to go far in order to find a holding, and by parity of reasoning, when he did apply

for a holding in his native place, he was very unlikely to find a competitor from a distance. Even in London, offers of rent over another person's head were exceedingly distasteful. The annals of the Grocers' Company in the fifteenth century contain the record of fines of £10 each inflicted on two freemen of the Company for having offered a higher rent than a sitting tenant, and so having rented his house over him.

The exceedingly scattered character of the several lands in the common fields of manors must have been a serious inconvenience to the non-resident landowner, who had to employ, in addition to his own labour of supervision, the charge and risk of a collector of rents. When the old system prevailed, the bailiff was not only a trusted servant in constant communication with his employers, but was conversant with every furrow which belonged to the domain, and constantly on the alert for his master's interests. But when the direct interest, and hitherto uninterrupted relations of the landowner with his estate, had come to a sudden end, especially with the memories of the past in their minds, and with the constant irritation of the Statute of Labourers, the small farmers, who were mere peasants, must have sympathised with everything which would weaken the hold of the landlord over property; and the landlord, as we shall see, was very keenly alive to any chance which the tenant gave him of increasing the rent of the occupier, and appropriating the benefits of his skill or industry.

During the fifteenth century, however, and notwithstanding the difficulties and losses of the landowner, the value of land rose rapidly. In the fourteenth century it was constantly obtained for ten years' purchase, the amount of land in the market being probably so abundant, and the competition for its purchase so slight, that it easily changed hands at such a rate. There was also no purchasing as yet on the part of the small proprietors, and it is always the case, that when land is made accessible to small buyers, the price rises rapidly, whereas if a country is one of large holders only, and hindrances in the way of the acquisition of land prevent small purchasers from buying or even discourage them, a panic in

the land market leads to a most disastrous depreciation. At the present time, if one may anticipate or deal with such a subject, while, under certain agricultural difficulties, the market price of land in England has fallen by thirty per cent. at least below what it was a dozen years ago, and in the opinion of some, a further fall is imminent, a late return from France shows that in almost every part of that country the price of land is still notably rising, though the agricultural calamities which have affected England affect France, besides what has been superadded in the disastrous diseases which have visited the vine, and in a less degree the silkworm. In England the opportunity and inclination for purchasing are seriously cramped by the absurd system of English conveyances and the preposterous charges which are imposed by the legal profession on the purchase and sale of land.

Land was valued at twenty years' purchase in the middle of the fifteenth century. In 1469 a valuation was made of Lord Cromwell's property. His lands were estimated at a capital value of £41,940 9*s.* 0½*d.*, that is, he was considered to have a rental of £2,097 a year. In his lifetime he had made gifts to Tattenhall College, in money, of over £15,000; in land and goods of more than £7,500; and in jewels of £3,000; so that he had inherited and collected an estate of £67,440. Cromwell was Lord High Treasurer in 1433, and was subsequently an ardent Yorkist. The same rate of purchase is indicated by the amount of money which divers benefactors gave to certain of the Oxford colleges with a view of settling a fixed stipend on the object of their benefaction, the investment being generally directed to be made in land.

The passion for acquiring land, and the habit of constantly purchasing it in parcels, led, during the fifteenth century, to the purchase of copyholds by persons of good means and position. Such a practice must have considerably raised copyholds in social value. No doubt they purchased or extinguished the baser parts of the tenure, perhaps repudiated them, and were powerful enough to do so with impunity. I do not doubt that the transaction under which the dues of

the Abbess of Sion, in the manor of Cheltenham, were reduced from £10 to ten marks (£6 13*s.* 4*d.*) by the arbitration of Sir Ralph Cotiller and others—an award which I discovered in the Record Office—was only a type of many such. Here Sir Ralph Cotiller, who, with others, undertakes the duty, appears to me to have the interest of a tenant in the manor. The award takes place at Cheltenham, in the presence of no less than twelve "esquires and many others." It is difficult to explain such a gathering for such an object, unless there had been interests influencing the assembly which are not stated on the record. But whatever may have been the motive, the change from the position of persons holding by a base tenure in 1381 must have been immeasurably different from what it was in 1452, when in the latter year the tenants were able, not only to force the Abbess of Sion into a renunciation of a third of her dues, but to enlist so powerful a body as the Prior of Deerhurst, Sir Ralph Cotiller, and others, to assist at and enforce the reduction of these liabilities.

It must not be imagined that the landowners and capitalists of the fifteenth century were indifferent to gain, and solely concerned with military operations. One of the most renowned captains of Henry's wars, Sir John Fastolfe, after having amassed a very considerable fortune in the wars and having settled in Norfolk, engaged very actively in the business of a corn dealer with the Low Countries. Many of his papers after his death came into the hands of Waynflete, the founder of Magdalene College, Oxford, and a *protégé* of Henry VI. He was appointed by this king his first master at Eton College, and, on Beaufort's death, to the bishopric of Winchester. He appears to have been Fastolfe's executor, and to have succeeded in diverting a portion of the funds, which the deceased captain intended for a very different foundation, to the opulent college in Oxford which he was endowing. From these papers, still preserved in the archives of the college, we find that Fastolfe sent large consignments of malt from Norfolk to Flanders, with which country it is probable that such transactions were habitually carried on. The price of barley and malt was exceedingly low in the Eastern Counties

during the greater part of the fifteenth century; and as the law permitted its exportation when the price was below a certain amount, the trade was constantly brisk. The malt appears to have generally been shipped from the port of Norwich. In return, the Flemings taught the Eastern Counties the use of hops, which appear to have been employed in that region for flavouring beer nearly half a century before they became known to the rest of England. It is highly probable that the practice, of which the accidental preservation of Fastolfe's accounts informed me, was very general, and that not a little, we may hope, of Cromwell's fortune was procured from this innocent source.

The passion for acquiring land was further stimulated by the success with which trade was carried on in the fifteenth century, certainly for that early part of it which preceded the loss of the French and Gascon seaboard. I shall take occasion hereafter to point out what the nature of that trade was, how it was extended, and how the Cannyngs and the Chicheles were the prosperous successors of the Poles, the Walworths, and the Whittingtons. But the principal evidence of the opulence of England in the fifteenth century is to be found in its splendid churches and handsome residences. The castle gives way in the greater part of the country to the embattled house, built when the owner was wealthy and luxurious, if he could afford it, of the new and costly material, brick. And such brick it was. After four centuries it is as good and sharp as when it was first turned out of the kilns. Arches were turned in it, which might, for their flatness and the strength of their crowns, well excite the envy of the modern builder, or rather of the modern householder. The vast and solid churches, too, with their lofty towers, are a special result of the wealth and taste of the fifteenth century, more costly, more business-like, but far less full of that poetry in stone which marks the exquisite structures of the earlier generations. These places, like York Cathedral, were long in building, for the great minster was being slowly raised through the greater part of the fifteenth century, and, if all told is true, this noble church was paid for by expedients which were so scanda-

lous that they gave no slight motive to the Reformation. But there is no building of this age which is marked by the beauties and the luxury of the time so fully as the gift of the pious Cannyngs, the church of St. Mary's, Redcliffe. Successful trade was no doubt a great source of English wealth in the time before me, but it was by no means the only source. The architectural antiquary can illustrate the fact more fully than I can pretend to do, or, for the matter of that, the professional architect.

It is more important for me to consider the consequences which ensued from the extinction of the capitalist landlord, and the decline of stock and land letting in England. They are so significant and become so permanent that they form an epoch in the social and economical condition of the country.

In the first place, they materially altered and ultimately destroyed those qualifications in the crude law of primogeniture which had for a long time modified its stringency. Whether it were by ordinance or custom, matters not; whether it arose at the epoch of the Conquest, or during that obscure period when the Norman and Saxon customs were being amalgamated in order to give effect to an aristocratical system, is not probably discoverable; but it is certain that the rule of giving the whole fee to the eldest son was early established, not only in the military tenures, but in that which we are advised the Norman settler would have disdained,—the estate of the free socager. The Kentish landowner kept his custom of equal division among all heirs of the same degree. There were manors where the serf was allowed to partition his holding, and some in which the parody of primogeniture, the succession of the youngest, under the name of borough English, was allowed, not without coarse guesses at the origin of the practice, to prevail, or was, maybe, constrained, in order that the lord might have the longest possible succession in the labour of his serf. But, with these exceptions, the whole land was under the custom of primogeniture. I have stated above that this custom was virtually modified under the system of capitalist cultivation by landlords. As long as the stock and land lease existed, it was in a less degree

alleviated. But as soon as ever the farmer's tenancy came into existence, and the farmer's capital superseded the earlier systems, the custom of primogeniture became absolute and dominant.

We know now, from the records of religious and secular corporations, that the stock and land lease was not infrequent with such proprietors. We know that even the old system of capitalist cultivation survived among some corporate landowners. But the majority of corporate estates, and almost all private estates, were, after a varying period, which averages some sixty or seventy years, according to the date at which the custom began, let to ordinary tenant farmers on short leases, who cultivated the land with their own capital, because they had succeeded in saving so much from the profits of a business, in which three times the value of the land was needed as capital in the older days, when land was cheap, and one-and-a-half times at least in later times was needed, as to either purchase their holdings out and out, of course with the old rents, or to cultivate a lease with their own property. My reader may perhaps think that this is an extravagant interpretation of the facts; but he will remember, if he has followed what I have pointed out pretty often, that there was little difference between a terminable and a perpetual lease, as far as the charge on the lessee was concerned, and that the real difference, discovered later on, when the money value of a fee farm rent was seen to be fixed, and that of a renewable lease was seen to be elastic, lay in the precarious nature of the latter. In point of fact, the way in which, on a demise, the lord could raise the letting value of his estate to a temporary tenant, was by mulcting him of a part of the average profits of agriculture, under the threat of eviction. When a considerable number of the tenants were freeholders at a full fee farm rent, by which I mean a rent not at all below what the tenant on a lease would pay, no grievance would arise in the mind of the lessee on a term; but when the landlord succeeded in exacting, under threat of eviction, an increased rent, that result ensued which Fitzhubert deprecates and Latimer denounces,—the raising of

the rent on the tenant, so that he dared not improve, and perhaps could hardly live.

It is not surprising that the landowner strove to screw his tenants. It is certain that during the fifteenth century the landowner was unable to screw them directly, and that the rack rent is a product of the early part of the sixteenth century. There is good reason to believe that the manorial lords enclosed largely where they could, and so curtailed the common pasture. This was the natural process by which a sheep farm was constructed, and sheep farms were common in the fifteenth century. But the lord had also to provide for his own. Any person who cares to study the *Fasti Anglicani*, by which the editors of that laborious publication mean the succession of the English bishops and deans, will see how the younger son after the Great Plague was quartered on the English Church. Even in the fourteenth century we find the names of Arundel, Courtney, Grandison, Nevil, Percy, Spenser, Stratford, Wentworth. They were more numerous in the fifteenth.

The great resource of the younger son, without land or means, and therefore sure to be quartered on the English people, was the army. The great war with France was maintained in the interest of the younger son. When the war was over he was to be a hanger on at the elder brother's house, or at the Court. For generations he was a mischievous, and sometimes a hateful adventurer. But as long as the stock and land lease lasted, he had his prospects in the division of the family estate. When it was no longer his share, he became a soldier of fortune. No one, I think, can doubt this, when he compares the aristocratic feuds of the reign of Richard II. with those of Henry VI. They were as bitter in the former reign as in the latter. I find it difficult to discover any more savage family vendetta than that between the house of Lancaster and the house of Norfolk after 1397. It endured for nearly a century, and was suspected; and, suspicion always awakening vengeance, punished for nearly a century more. It is true that the rivals in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries abstained from harrying

the peasant. But it is quite certain that they fought the battle out among themselves till both were nearly exhausted, and that Richard was only able to levy a poor following when he met the latest adventurer at Bosworth.

The perils of the war of succession, or, as I should prefer to name it, the war of the nobles, who had not the hypocrisy to call it, as the French at the same epoch did, the war of the public good, led to the general use of entails and the adoption of the civil law expedient of trusts. The mischief of the former, as far as the political result went, was obviated by parliamentary attainder; that of the latter, under the name of uses, was more immediately unmanageable and more permanently disastrous. I am disposed to believe that parliamentary attainder was much more a threat than a reality, more a proclamation that loss would ensue if partizanship in arms were persisted in, than a real risk to combatants. On any other hypothesis I cannot understand how it was that on petition, at least in the reign of Edward IV., a parliamentary attainder was always remitted by the king. We are told that Edward was suspicious and vindictive. And much might have made him so. He had to deal with a bitter faction, once dominant, and only lately repressed or proscribed. He had to count with the creatures of his own folly, a new nobility and political nepotism. He subdued the defection of those to whom he owed much, and who thought he owed them much more—the most dangerous enemies with whom any man has to deal, and with whom a ruler can hardly make any terms. He lived in an age when the revenge of injuries had risen to the dignity of a moral virtue, to be corrected only with the pretence of forgiveness and the exaction of the fullest usury for the delay. He had to deal with the hardest struggle of all, the treachery of his own brother, the only person whom he could not forgive. But he forgave every one else, excused their hostility, remitted their forfeitures. But he was expensive and poor. His grandson remitted nothing which came within the reach of his clutches.

But the use, or the trust, as it was subsequently called,

was a different matter. It was the origin of the true law of entail, under which the possession of land may be a danger, and is the means of fraud. It perpetuated the poverty of the younger son and the system of quartering him on the public purse. It was the origin of the principle of vested interests, perhaps the most anti-social and dangerous doctrine which has pretended to justify the robbery of all labour, and will justify the antagonism of all labour to privilege. The development of the younger son as a social pauper and a social leech, is at the bottom of most of the financial extravagances and all the financial meanness of the English administrations to our own day. It is difficult to be thrifty in the public expenditure where one should be, and impossible to be generous where one ought to be. It is true that the most glaring scandals of the old system have been put out of sight, but not a few of the indirect inconveniences remain, and among them especially the retention of sham offices in the public service.

In the fifteenth century these law-made paupers appear to have been quartered on the royal revenues, especially on the hereditary estate of the Crown. In a later age they were put on such fixed sources of revenue as were considered to be permanent, such as the post-office or the civil list. Hence the constant outcry in the fifteenth century, when the poverty of the Crown rendered an appeal to Parliament almost annual, or at least as frequent as the meeting of Parliament, that grants should be resumed. The prayer is often answered affirmatively, but the exceptions are so numerous that the remedy is one of little efficacy. My readers will be familiar with the history of the struggle between Parliament and William III., when that king, with very pardonable feelings, wished to reward and enrich the Dutch gentlemen who had followed and served him.

The leases which were granted to tenants were, as I have said, generally short,—from six to ten years. This rule was, I conceive, not adopted in the hope that rents might be raised at the termination of the period, since the rent for the mere use of land was singularly invariable from the earliest

times till close upon the end of the sixteenth century, but in order to secure the constant verification of the property from which the rent issued. It is a curious fact, too, that these tenancies were generally made up of a number of plots, the terms for which ran out at different periods. Thus a farmer might have five or six separate holdings from the same landlord, the demise of which might, and constantly did, run over the whole period for which he held his longest lease. His tenure would cease, say, in one plot, in two years from a given date; in another, the remainder would be three years; in another, four; in another, five, and so on, so that his leases were constantly falling in and being renewed or transferred to another tenant. It seems probable that such a system arose by the fact that the small tenants extended their holdings as opportunities offered, taking a strip here, a land there, a close in another place, a meadow in a fourth place, at different dates. The custom, much more frequent in ordinary estates than it was in those of corporations, must have indirectly given the tenant a hold on his tenancy which he would not have had if the whole estate were entered on at once, and all the parcels of the occupancy were for the same term. I do not imagine that, provided his rent was paid, the tenant was often disturbed, as it was not till the sixteenth century that attempts at rack-renting began.

Grants of freehold estate for life are by no means uncommon in the earliest times. But these tenancies I generally find were additions made to the holding of some existing freeholder in fee of inheritance, in consideration of some service rendered, or in satisfaction of some debt, or for any other private reason of the lord's own. Thus, at Ibstone, in 1298, one of the free tenants, who holds a half-virgate by deed, under conditions of certain payments in money, kind, and labour, holds also a couple of crofts containing another half-virgate for the term of his life, at a rent, but without service. But it is unlikely that life estates were, in early times, or for a long time subsequently, common. An instance apparently to the contrary occurs to me in a tenure of the fifteenth century. In 1441, John Franke, Master of the Rolls, devised

£1,000 to his executors in order to purchase lands for the benefit of Oriel College. The college acquired, with commendable self-denial, the reversionary interest in a Berkshire estate, then held for life by John Norris and his wife Alice, and were a good deal disappointed at the prolonged period during which the widow's life was protracted. It is, however, quite possible that these persons, being childless, had themselves purchased the freehold as an annuity, as the best means for investing their funds, or savings, since the college purchased their interest from the reversioners.

It is said that the monastic houses, foreseeing the dissolution which threatened them, and for which there were very ominous precedents during the fifteenth century in the confiscation of the alien priories, and the not infrequent suppression of individual religious houses on the plea of misconduct, began to grant long leases of forty years or more. It is, I believe, well ascertained that, at the general dissolution, such leases were found to have been very frequent, and that in consequence the spoil in land was far less in actual value than had been anticipated, though the chattels of the religious houses must have been relatively of enormous value. This is confirmed by the fact that very shortly after the dissolution Henry was in as great pecuniary difficulties as ever, an incredible result had he not only acquired the chattels, much of which probably went to pay his debts, but the lands, which are over and over again said to have been one-third of the whole area of the kingdom. The reversionary interest in these lands was very large, but even this appears to have been soon lost or alienated from the Crown.

The practice of the religious corporations was followed by the secular clergy and the colleges, who adopted the system of granting long leases of lands, renewable at fixed periods on the payment of a fine. Originally these fines were very small, probably only a handsel, or earnest money, or a complimentary present to the principal authorities of the corporation. The fine for entrance was familiar enough in the case of copyholders or tenants in villeinage, and instances could be multiplied of such payments by such tenants on the entry

or succession to customary estates. But they are not entered on the earlier college accounts, either because they were trivial and treated as the perquisites of the officials, or because they were not paid at all. The earliest price for entry by a personage who must have entered on one of these leases is a payment of £50 made by the Earl of Derby to King's College for the *introit* into Prescot in the year 1533-4.

There was, however, one considerable source of income besides sheep farming, to which allusion has been made already. I refer to the profits obtained from the sale of firewood and timber. The more opulent and better-built houses had long possessed chimneys, and with the use of the new material, brick, these conveniences became general and even necessary; the purchases of bricks in places where the article was not, as in the Eastern Counties, largely manufactured, being generally described as for fireplaces. I find andirons in the Eastern part of England early in the beginning of the fifteenth century. In these fireplaces wood, called generally tall-wood, was burnt, as also what was called logs and great wood, the trimmings of timber. Faggots, reed, sedge, and turf were burnt in open grates, but most commonly were employed, it seems, for heating ovens.

The most important kind of fuel, however, was charcoal. The trade of the charcoal-burner was very ancient and very common, considerable districts where wood was abundant being occupied by colliers, and the price of the article rapidly rising. The most common way for warming the large halls of mansions and colleges was by a charcoal-burner set in the middle of the hall and filled with glowing embers, the fumes of the burning mass escaping through a lantern in the roof. These vast charcoal grates have been continued within modern memory in some of the Cambridge colleges, and must have been exceedingly common at an earlier period. I have constantly found, in examining the accounts of colleges in Oxford and Cambridge, that the amount received from the woods of these corporations rapidly became equal to and gradually exceeded the rent derivable from the lands

let to farm or lease, till at last the profits on their woods became the most important source of income.

One other expedient was adopted, peculiar, as far as I have been able to discover, to the Eastern Counties, where rents were as stationary and inelastic as elsewhere. This was to stipulate that, in place of money, the tenant should pay a certain amount of wheat, barley, or malt, and a number of sheep at fixed rates. Thus a corporation would require twenty quarters of wheat and an equal amount of barley to be supplied to them at 5*s.* and 4*s.* a quarter, when the market value of these commodities would be three times as great. So they would demand the delivery of fifty sheep at 1*s.* 6*d.* or 2*s.* each, as the case may be, when the market prices show a similar rise in the true price of mutton. This practice begins very early, and even before the rise of prices, which I shall comment on hereafter. It seems to me to be an attempt to get in an indirect way that increase of rent which the landowner evidently thought he ought to obtain, but which he was hopeless of obtaining in money. At last, as far as Oxford and Cambridge and the two great schools of Winchester and Eton were concerned, the practice was enforced by law, under the celebrated statute of 1576. This statute is supposed to have been due to the prescience of Burleigh, but the principle had been adopted many years before in that part of England with which Burleigh in his earlier days was familiar, and in which the spoils of the Cecils had been accumulated. That it had not been adopted in other parts of England was not, I conclude, from want of will, but from want of opportunity, or from the jealously conservative attitude of the tenant farmers.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TAXATION.

The Particular Scope of Economical History—The Revolutions of 1399 and 1668 Compared—The Parliaments of Henry IV.—The Career and Character of Henry V.—The Taxes of the Time—The Character of Henry VI.—The Wealth of the Aristocracy and the Poverty of the King—The Speaker's Function—Income Taxes—The Allowance for Impoverished Towns—The Speakership of Tresham—The Unpopularity of the Bishops—Cade's Rebellion—The Imprisonment and Death of Henry—Tresham's Finance—Thorpe's Budget—Edward IV. and his Revenue—Benevolences—Henry VII.; his Income Tax—The Aid of 1503—The Expedients of Henry—The Treaty of Commerce—The Succession of Henry VIII.—His Extravagance—The Dissolution of the Monasteries—The Acquisitions soon squandered—The Debasement of the Currency.

IN dealing with the history of agriculture and wages, I am not immediately concerned with those topics on which historians ordinarily dilate. The struggles of bygone diplomacy, the claims of extinct dynasties, the exploits of historical heroes, the rivalries of buried factions, the ambitions of mythical statesmanship, the plans of obsolete policy, the enmities and friendships, the intrigues, the victories, the defeats of kings, generals, and ministers, are nearly all out of that which I propose to myself. They are properly recorded and dwelt on by historians. It may be that not a single force in politics is wasted, as we are told none are in nature, and that if we could trace the effect of those political occurrences, which are not wholly superficial, we should be able to follow them into the life of our own age. It is sometimes, indeed, the fortune of the historian to detect some such results, and to trace them back to their veritable causes,—as, for example, the development of the Burgundian duchy of the fifteenth century, and its influence on the politics of Western Europe even up

to recent times. But the narrative of the historian rarely aids the science of politics, and only occasionally the philosophy of society.

But the knowledge of what a nation's industry and economy have been, the discovery of the processes by which the facts and purposes of the past have been developed into the habits, the traditions, the pursuits, and the energies of the present, is the true history of the race. Unfortunately, no age, except by accident, takes cognizance designedly of contemporaneous practice, and the economical historian has to piece his particulars together, when he can obtain them, with the same care which the naturalist adopts (though, unfortunately, he cannot do it with the same conviction) who builds up a skeleton and an organism from a few fragments of bone. Here, however, all facts have their place and relevancy; for it is more certain that the existing generation of Englishmen have received their habits, their practices, and their public character from a series of continuous and abiding influences, than it even is that they have inherited capacities and tendencies from the generations of whom they are the descendants. It is, however, necessary that I should give a sketch of the leading political events of the age which I am treating, partly because the action of governments always has its influence on the economical condition of the nation, however much the genius of a people can modify the effect induced by the administration of its public affairs, and partly because the financial expedients of government illustrate the social condition of the people. The fifteenth century, moreover, has a peculiar interest to English students. In it the most important constitutional principles were affirmed and the most important parliamentary precedents established, so that the patriots of the first Stuart kings could claim that they were restoring the fabric of a bygone age when they were resisting the forces of despotism and the conspiracies of the Court and the Church.

The Revolution of 1399 bears a strong resemblance to that of 1688—the difference of time and manners considered. In both cases, a sovereign, who a little while before appeared to

have a secure throne, was suddenly deposed from his dignity and found to be entirely friendless. In both cases a powerful faction of nobles and churchmen prepared the revolution, and for a time the whole country acquiesced in it. In both it was found necessary, if the change were to be made, to supersede an infant heir of higher claim than the sovereign who was actually accepted. In both cases, the reaction commenced immediately after the throne appeared to be settled. In both cases, the new king had to reckon with a discontented faction of nobles and churchmen. In both cases, the worst enemy of the new monarch was a man whom he had loaded with benefits but could not satisfy, who had aided the revolution by his dissimulation and strove to reverse it by his perfidy; for Northumberland was as false and as treacherous as Marlborough, and though Henry was constrained to keep peace abroad in order to maintain himself at home, and William's life was, except for a short period, engaged in an incessant struggle with the French king, yet each reign was followed by a succession of splendid victories, which in the end were barren. And, to make the parallel complete even in particulars, the first Parliament of Henry was summoned under circumstances not unlike those of the Convention Parliament under William.

Whether it was that the Commons of the fifteenth century thought that the Parliament which changed the succession and put Henry on the throne was entitled to be consulted in the conduct of all affairs and to be strengthened in its privileges, or the peculiar character of the times aided their pretensions, it is certain that at no time before, and, for many generations, at no time subsequently, did the Parliament obtain so large a place in the government. They claim to have a conference with a Committee of the Lords; they go some distance in taking cognizance of their own returns; they insist on privilege of Parliament; they claim the right of sending for and amending the Lords' Bills; they provide that due notice shall be given of elections; they extend the county franchise to suitors in the county court and all others, which seems to bestow a universal suffrage in the counties; they

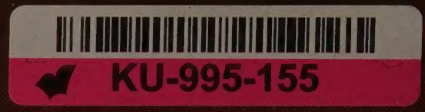
attempt to exercise an absolute control over the administration and the estates of the Crown, and appear to have secured to themselves the right of originating grants. If, as was stated at the time, the execution of Scrope was followed immediately by Henry's sickening with leprosy, we may conclude, perhaps, that the public opinion of the age considered that Henry's treatment of his cousin, which was said to have been signally perfidious, was visited by the displeasure of Providence. It is not unlikely, too, that Henry had found it necessary to bribe his partizans in the revolution with lavish grants from the Crown estates, as he was constantly appealing to his subjects for money, and they for their part ordered a resumption of his grants, and prohibited in the future that any person should receive part of the ancient inheritance of the Crown without the consent of Parliament. And yet the king had added to the ordinary estate of the Crown the extensive possessions of the duchy of Lancaster, which remained a separate domain till it was united to the Crown by Edward IV., though it was kept, as it is to this day, under an independent administration.

But whether the unpopularity of Henry was due to the defects of his title, to the perjuries by which he had won his crown, and to the harshness of the means which he employed to make his position secure, or to the compliances and concessions which he made in order to disarm opposition, or to the blight and disease which came upon his life, and cut him off at an early age—he was a little over forty-seven years old at his death—everything was forgotten in the splendid career of his son. Henry of Monmouth was twelve years old at the time of Richard's deposition, and only sixteen when he fought with Percy at Shrewsbury. If the stories of his youthful dissipations are not pure inventions, they are probably heightened by contrast with the stern morality of his riper years, and were perhaps invented by the Lollards, whom he felt himself constrained to persecute. No English monarch was ever more popular than Henry. He had to meet a conspiracy at the beginning of his reign, but it was put down with little difficulty. He had previously escaped from a

conspiracy of some desperate and fanatical Lollards, whom persecution had driven to fury, and whose rank in society shows how the teachings of the Wiklifite party had permeated the most unlikely persons.

Henry united those qualities which the English have always admired but have rarely witnessed even in their best kings. He was strictly orthodox and severely just, tenacious of his right, and loyal to his word. He was a model of private virtue, of knightly courage, of military skill, who conquered fortune rather than was favoured by her. He seems to have entered on the French war not merely to recover what was lost by the violated peace of Bretigni, perhaps to revive and enforce his claim of descent, but more to correct the frightful scandals of the French Court and society. He announces his purposes and his motives in language like that of some Puritan commander in the early days of the Parliamentary War, as though he had been sent by God to chastise the guilty. His army, well schooled, drilled, and invincible, was kept under rigid discipline, and, as far as the king could make it, was as pious as Cromwell's Ironsides, as confident as they were in the genius of its general, as staunch in the hour of battle, and as severe in that of victory. Nor was Henry simply influenced by the lust of conquest. He was beyond measure anxious to heal the scandals which troubled the Church and the schism which distracted it. He did all in his power to hasten the assemblage of the Council of Constance, and to constrain all heretics and schismatics, from the Pope to the Hussites, to obey the will of Christendom in that assembly of kings and prelates and doctors of law. He could not suffer the Lollards, whose tenets he believed to be subversive of society as well as dishonouring to God. But he condescended to argue with these sectaries, and to show them, as he thought, the more excellent way, lamenting that their obstinacy left him no alternative to the punishment which the law inflicted on them.

The demands of the first two Henries of the House of Lancaster were met by grants of fifteenths and tenths, by taxes on wool and hides, differential duties being levied on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